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DRAMA
IN
SANSKRIT LITERATURE

RESERVED BOOK

BY
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PREFACE

Three reasons have made me write this book.

1 I am a student and ardent admirer of *Sanskrit* literature.

2 In my own language and province I have been a dramatist of some reputation and have fifteen years experience of producing and acting plays and

3 After *Sanskrit Drama* that readable and authoritative volume of the late Dr A. B. Keith there has been no work dealing generally with the history of *Sanskrit* drama

It would be presumptuous to disregard as trifling or insignificant the contribution which the Western and our critics have made to the study of the *Sanskrit Drama*. But their pioneering enthusiasm should not obscure us to the fact that dramatic criticism in *Sanskrit* has so far proceeded on such orthodox lines that the last seventy or eighty years appear to have added but little to our understanding of the greatness of the classical tradition or the significance of individual plays either as works of art or as stages of development of the dramatic art. The fact that the *Sanskrit* plays possess a poetic splendour all their own seems to have weighed so heavily on the minds of the critics that invariably the more significant fact that they are plays first and poetry next has either been ignored or forgotten. We would be paying but a poor compliment to our dramatists if we merely treated them as purveyors of the epic or traditional stories with some embellishments. That they had something definite of their own to convey through rearrangements or modifications of the age-old stories should therefore be assumed as a preliminary to an appreciation of the special contribution of each single dramatist, and the critic, if he is insightful enough will find in the end that his assumptions will be amply substantiated and proved. The same has to be said about what little has been done in evolving a consistent account of the growth and development of *Sanskrit Drama*. Dependence on scanty internal evidence has led to unending controversy. It has never even been suspected that a close examination of the growth of dramatic technique may throw a good deal of light on the course of the development of the pre-classical and classical drama. In the main I have approached the subject from these

points of view and I am sure some of my conclusions will offend the orthodox critic. Yet I do not consider the present work as a study either complete or satisfactory. It is my intention to complete it by another volume dealing with the stage the production etc. in ancient and mediæval India and to bring the story of the Indian Stage upto the modern times.

In writing the following chapters I have depended mostly on *Sanskrit* originals. Dealing mainly with the history of the art of drama I have not troubled myself with the vexed question of the dates of the various dramatists. Nevertheless the order in which I have dealt with the individual dramatists represents in my view the chronological order of those dramatists.

I must add one word about the quotations from original *Sanskrit*. I have preferred the Roman script (but avoided giving Devanāgarī side by side for want of space) since that reaches both Indian and foreign readers.

Some chapters of this book were written as early as ten years ago. Some of them appeared in journals to all of which I am thankful.

To my friends Prof. V. M. Inamdar and Sjt. H. S. Patil goes the entire credit of seeing the book from the preparation of the manuscript to the preparation of the index and through the press. But for their enthusiasm the publication would not have been as desirable as it certainly claims to be.

I must thank all those readers, friends and actor-collaborators of mine who never suspected that I would learn in their company if not at their cost. To my students in the college also my thanks are due for what I have learnt while teaching them *Sanskrit* poetry, *Sanskrit* rhetorics and *Sanskrit* Drama.

My heartiest thanks are due to one of my friends and sympathisers but for whose timely and liberal help the book could never have been published.

January 1947
Dharwar

R. V. JAGIRDAI

WORKS REFERRED TO WITH THEIR ABBREVIATIONS

R V	Rgveda.
S V	Samaveda
Y V	Yajurveda
A. V	Ātharvanaveda.
Mbh.	Mahābhārata.
Ram	Rāmāyana.
N S	Nāṭya Śāstra (Kāshī Sk. Series)
D R	Dasarupakam
S D	Sāhityadarpana
M S	Manusmṛti
C H I	Cambridge History of India
G E I	Great Epics of India
Bib Drama	Bibliography of Sanskrit Drama (Columbia University Indo-Iranian Series, Vol III)
Skt Drama.	The Sanskrit Drama by late Professor A. B Keith
Brit Drama.	British Drama by A Nicolls.
Ind Theat	The Indian Theatre by E P Horowitz.

BHĀṢA'S PLAYS

Prat	Pratima
Abh	Abhīṣekanataṅga
Bal	Balacanta
S V	Śvapnavasavadatta
P Y	Pratyaṅgaugandharayana.
P R	Pancarātra
M V	Madhyamavyayoga
D V	Dutavahana.
D G	Dutaślokaśloka
K B	Karabhāra
U B	Crubhanga
Car	Carudatta
Avi	Avimāṇala

KĀLIDĀSA'S PLAYS

A Śak	Abhayanakasakuntalam.
Vik.	Vikramorvashyam
Malav	Malavikāgnimitram
Mrchh.	Mṛcchakatikam of Sudrasa

BHAVABHŪTIS PLAYS

M V C	Mahāvīracaritam.
M. M	Malatī Mādhavam
U R.	Uttararamacaritam

ŚRĪ HARṢAS PLAYS

P D	Priyadarśikā
Nag	Nagānandam.
Rat	Ratnāvalī
M R	Mudrarākṣasam of Viśakhadatta
V S	Venambāram of Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa
K M	Kundamālā.
A R.	Anargha Rāghava
Pras R	Prasanna Rāghava
Prab C	Prabodha Candrodaya
K M	Karpūra Mañjan
B B	Balabhārata
Sub D	Subhadra Dhanañjaya.

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CHAPTER I

GROWTH OF SANSKRIT LITERATURE

The scope of the following pages is extremely limited. An attempt will be made to survey that part of Sanskrit Literature which pertains to Drama in the popular sense of that word. The survey would be many sided. Sanskrit Drama in theory in practice in its relations to contemporary social conditions and its place in Literature in general and so on. Thus a study of Sanskrit Literature itself though in outlines would be essential to start with. That study forms the background for the present work. Sanskrit Drama is one of the chief aspects of Sanskrit Literature.

To enable the readers to follow our thesis it will have to be explained at the outset as to what is meant by Literature. For our purposes Literature means two things. (1) Literature is life—Life understood as a vital force always working through and in relation to its surroundings. In this sense Literature is far wider in its scope as well as in its form. In trees and in flowers budding in spring or fading in autumn, in rivers flowing and in seas surging in the rustling of wind and in the singing of birds equally as in the behaviour of Man is embedded Life's Literature. Life expressed Life interpreted Life asserted and Life made living—all this is Literature. To a man of routine life, however such a literature is denied in its freshness. (2) Thus arises the second meaning of Literature, viz the work of Poets. A poet is one who has seen Life as expression accommodation and assimilation and who holds out for others like a mirror this vision of his. It is this mirror held thus attempt to convey one's vision to others that constitutes literature.

Sanskrit Literature is no exception to these general observations. From the early days when hymns were chanted by the Vedic seers to the rising sun in the east to the shining fire on the altar to the thundering clouds above we find in literary compositions contemporary life and thoughts. Some of the Vedic hymns especially those sung in honour of the Dawn or of Indra the wielder of the Thunder bolt, are fine specimens of fact and fancy. The Vedic hymns are the earliest known (Sanskrit) Literature. Therein do observation sympathy and surprise play the most important part. It would be a

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reasonable supposition that after a time surprise gave place to speculation and sympathy to study while observation grew keener and closer. In the case of Sanskrit Literature at least this seems to be the fact. For after the Vedic hymns came the Upaniṣads and the Brāhmanas—one an outflow in speculation and the other an attempt at specialisation. Both however are still attempts to understand and interpret Life—life within and life without, the phenomena of living and growing human beings and the equally regular phenomena of seasonal life on the earth and of stellar life in the sky. Whether it is philosophy or ritualism does not matter for our purpose. It is sufficient (and it is true) to note that the Upaniṣads as well as the Brāhmanas attempt to systematise the observations of Man and thus try to understand Man and his surroundings.

This process of systematisation culminated at a time known to scholars as the Sūtra period. The Sanskrit word Sūtra means an aphorism wherein a mass of details is compressed within a minimum of words. Thus we find Sūtras of Philosophy of Interpretation of Grammar of Prosody, of Dialectics and so on. How was it possible to codify such vast and varied knowledge in so few words? There is only one intelligent attempt of understanding such a possibility that is by admitting the rise of technical words. Technical words are always words given a special power to convey a logically connected series of ideas, mental processes or material phenomena. It is quite likely that by the time of the Sūtras there was a big list of such technical words. The process of coining such words was there quite early.¹ Specialisation and technical words go hand in hand. As illustrations of specialisation we have (1) Yāska's Nirukta of the 7th century B.C. which is a work on Etymology and (2) the study of Mimāṃsā which in spite of its etymological sense, is a Science of Interpretation. The recognition of the six Vedāṅgas probably synchronised with the attempts at specialisation.² So we might conclude, in spite of the unfortunate lack of sufficient data that what we now understand by scientific or technical study was current in India since soon after the Vedic hymns.

At this stage we come across the peculiar yet perpetual irony

1 Cf. The etymological attempts of the Brāhmana texts.

2 Cf. The word Vedāṅga means a branch of Vedic study as the prosody, the ritual in the glossary etc. of the Vedic hymns.

of the human mind. The human mind in its freshness is so interested in life and sets to study it then it is so interested in the study itself that it makes life uninteresting. Specialisation has neither place in nor favour with human life. Human life is ever fresh. Specialisation is ever stale. It is for this reason that small connection indeed is found between scientific study and life between technical literature and the tedium of life. It should not be supposed that technical study is entirely irrelevant in life. From our present point of view, however, technical study has no place in literature. The Sūtra literature of the 6th century B.C. along with the earlier tendencies it represents has nothing to convey of the life of the average man and has also no interest for the average man.

Side by side with the Sūtras is to be found another form of literature which in contrast to the technical could be termed popular. The material available in this respect too is meagre nevertheless the little that is known is genuinely illustrative and hence sufficient for the present purpose. The earliest that could be called popular without any hesitation is the epic literature viz. the two epics—the Mahabhārata and the Rāmāyana. These two works are essentially narrative stories. The authors themselves reveal their intention of setting the narrative to recitation. Thus the Mbh. —

idam sata sahasram tu
slokanam punya karmanām
upākhyānah saha jñeyam
stavyam bhāratam uttamam (I : 77)

Here are 100,000 verses describing meritorious (i.e. heroic) deeds together with the legends therein, this work—the Bhārata—is the best to be listened to.

That these works were mainly intended for the populace is evident from many obvious circumstances. The benefits to the listeners as enumerated are too tempting. The contents too are tempting. Besides the material relevant to the story could be found all that would appeal to the average mind and intellect. The common place of life is not excluded. The style is simple and direct—direct in the sense of being less literary or artificial and more free or colloquial.

3 Cf. vākya jāti viśeṣaś ca loka yatrā kramāś ca yah (Herein is to be found the interesting observation as well as the ways of the world) Mbh. I : 94

That the epics form a landmark in the growth of Sanskrit Literature is but obvious. The amount of work done by scholars in this respect is eloquent enough. The point relevant here is different. We are concerned not with what the epics achieved but with what they encouraged. With no amount of exaggeration it might be said that the Mahabhārata first and the Rāmayana next introduced a new vogue into Sanskrit Literature. What we now speak of as Literary Art in general could be said to have begun in India with the writing of the epics. What is interesting now and must have been no less than a miracle in those days is turning literature into an art. What with the Vedic sentiments growing dim, what with the mysteries invested and ascribed thereto by the Brahmanas, what with the esoteric speculations of the Upaniṣads and what with the stifying style of the Sūtras, men must have welcomed, applauded, encouraged and been enraptured by literature like the epics which would flow in easy narration, would ebb with emotions and charm with music¹. The epics are such describing the heroic deeds, the thrilling adventures and the noble efforts of warrior princes. What would be more pleasing and more comfortable to a people living in mystic horror of powerful surroundings than Man depicted as a successful hero against all evil and inconvenient forces? More pleasing still as the manner in which it was done viz. by means of pithy, intelligible verses known as ślokas.

That literature could be so stimulating and refreshing and fascinating was a new experience which was felt in all the first flush of enthusiasm. The post-epic works that have been retained for us through tradition are mostly works where literature is an art wherein the purpose is more to enthrall and to enrapture than to teach or to speculate. We shall find along this tradition some masters of letters who have successfully emulated the authors of the epics in blending Art with Life, Pleasure with Intelligence, Beauty with Morality and Ecstasy with Divinity. Thinkers have thought, teachers have taught and poets have sung not in the school books of logic or rhyme but in artistic forms modelled on the epic. The one notable feature of the preserved post-epic literature is life through enjoyment and appreciation of Beauty or Harmony or whatever one would like to call the convenient and comfortable adjustment of man to his surroundings.

It should not be supposed that all this is a phantom raised by our own enthusiasm. Appreciation was quite early admitted as

a necessary faculty in study and culture. This statement could be well illustrated by a reference to Bharata's Nāṭya sāstra. It matters little indeed to us whether Bharata is really the author whether the Nāṭya sāstra belongs to the post Christian or the pre Christian era. We are concerned not with the thoughts of Bharata (or of the Nāṭya sāstra) but with the tendencies he (or it) represents. Bharata's treatment of this question presupposes that the subject has been under discussion a long time before. Secondly Bharata quotes the opinions of his predecessors. For this reason we feel justified in accepting the validity of Bharata's remarks with reference to the post-epic literary phenomena. Charm and appreciation says Bharata form the key note of a literary piece. Nothing exists or excels without *rasa* (na hi rasādṛṣṭe kaś cid arthah pravartate, p. 71). That *rasa* includes among others the idea of charm and appreciation foremost is apparent from the analysis (N S chap VI) that follows the above statement.

(1) In the first place, *rasa* is explained in general terms as follows —

rasa iti bah padārthah ? atra ucyate
 āsvadyatvāt Katham āsvādyo rasah ? atra ucyate
 Yathā hi nānā vyañjana samskr̥tam annam bhuñjānā
 rasān āsvādayanti sumanasah puruṣāḥ harṣādīn
 cāpi adhigacchanti tathā nānābhāva abhinaya
 vyañjitan vag angasattvopetan sthayaḥ bhāvan
 āsvādayanti sumanasah preksakāḥ

I shall tell you what *rasa* is and how it is enjoyed (i.e. experienced). In a meal consisting of various tastes and savours the diners are pleased with one feeling of pleasure arising from different causes. Likewise the audience would feel rapture through experience conveyed by emotions and movements.

(ii) Secondly the details of *rasa* experience are analysed as follows —

✓ A percept or a feeling depends on a stimulus. The stimulus is known as the vibhāva. Response to a stimulus is two fold voluntary and involuntary. the involuntary or the immediate is physical or perceptible and is known as the anubhāva. the voluntary or the mental is a reaction and is known as the vyabhūcāribhāva. The involuntary or the anubhāva has a physical cause (i.e. is due to

a direct contact) and a mental effect as in the case of per-*spiring* through fear or of being thrilled by pleasant suddenness etc. the voluntary or the *vyabhi \check{c} āribhāva* has a mental cause and physical effect as in the case of being tired or of feeling relaxed etc. A stimulus with this two fold response means a complete experience or appreciation. To feel the bodily thrill and to be exhilarated at heart is the complete experience of beautiful in Nature unless we do that we do not feel at home (to speak in prose fashion) or we do not lose ourselves (to speak the same poetically) in the beauty surrounding us. This state of losing oneself is known to Bharata as the *sthāyī bhāva* (i.e. a state of unperturbed peace) and he says that the *vibhāva*, the *anubhāva* and the *vyabhi \check{c} āribhāva* merge into harmony or the *sthāyī bhāva*. In other words when Bharata says that *rasa* is the *sine qua non* of a literary work he only means that the work would serve as a stimulus by experiencing which the reader or the spectator is appreciatingly charmed into a complete surrender. This view of Bharata was taken up later on by the rhetorician Ānandavardhana who maintains that a *Kāvya* or literary piece could be appreciated only by a *sahṛdaya* the word *sahṛdaya* he explains as follows —

yesam kāvya abhyāsa anuśīlana vasād
 vīśadībhūte mano-mukure varmanayatanmayībhavana
 yogyatā te hṛdayasamvadabhājah sahrdayāḥ

A *sahṛdaya* is thus one whose mind and tastes are refined and who is sympathetic to the extent of losing himself in (i.e. identifying with) the things experienced.

We are anticipating however. All this discussion only shows that a time was when literary works were solely judged with reference to charm and appreciation. And such a time it is urged here began with the epics.

The epics were important from another point of view too. They formed a charming recitation and recitation would be still more easy convenient and charming if it were undertaken by those who were either gifted or trained for it. The popularity of the epics opened a great chance for such a class of reciters. In the epics themselves we have evidence to show that the work of training reciters came into existence soon after or not simultaneously. The chief narrator in the present version of the *Mbh* is Sauti the son or descendant of Sūta. The epic *Rāmāyaṇa* was sung by Kuśīlavas

trained by the author—the sage Vālmīki—himself Sūta however seems to be the earliest of a trained class of reciters. The Sūta was probably a professional. In the Mbh at the opening of the Āstika Parvan Sauti says —

itihāsam imam viprah purānam paricakṣate
kṛṣṇa dvaipāyana proktam namīṣāranyavasiṣu
pūrvam pracoditah Sutaḥ pitā me Lomahaṛṣanaḥ
tasmād aham upanūtya pravakṣyāmi yathātatham.

This legend is supposed to be very old it was narrated by Vyāsa to the residents of the Naimiṣa forest my father Lomahaṛṣana was first trained to recite it, and I shall narrate it just as I have learnt it from my father (I xii 68)

This Sūta however should be distinguished from the Magadha a bard who was also a reciter⁴. Though both were professional reciters the Māgadhā was a kind of a Court bard who recited mainly if not only the genealogy and the greatness of the king under whom he served. The Sūta was a *paurāṇika* i.e. one who knew the whole traditional lore and was also a wandering minstrel. The style of the epics encouraged the growth and importance of the Sūta class and that class in its turn perpetuated the popularity of the epics.

Lastly the epics fulfilled another function. By their fervour and popularity they not only directed but also restricted positively the course of subsequent literature to one uniform channel. Most of the extant later Sanskrit works are modelled on the epics. It was only an accident that the bulk of the Mbh prevented it from being a source of emulation while the Rāmāyana written as it was round one hero and with no complications or digressions formed the chief model but if the Rāmāyana was the source of emulation the Mahabhārata was as often the source of inspiration. In all this the later writers unfortunately miscalculated. At the time they wrote the Sanskrit of the epics was further and further being removed from the contemporary form it had assumed in the meanwhile. A direct appeal to the reader was now out of question. So we find in all these later works—known as the classical Sanskrit Literature—a lack of the natural ease and charm and flow of the epics secondly a deliberate attempt to make up for that loss by artificial means like extravagance and ostentation 30 2 2 2

4 Cf. in this connexion CH1 Vol 1 p 130 131 257 & 297

and compact more systematic and more poetic for this reason the Rāmāyaṇa was hailed as the ādi kāvya or the first literary poem

As a result of such circumstances poetic style became the vehicle of popular literature. In the early days of the epics it was only convenient to recite and easier to follow. But as time wore down the language of the epics to variations and modifications the advantage of the style diminished and as writing came more and more into vogue the early advantage of a recitational style lost its force. But in spite of such changes in the language within and in the society without the post-epic poets copied the metrical model of the epics. Longer and more difficult metres were introduced. Narration too lost its simplicity and naturalness and the poetic style that was once the magician's wand of a popular artist turned into the school master's rod of a pedant. The music that touched the finer chords of human hearts turned to a drone that sent to sleep some self-centred petty prince or that pampered the pundits into drowsy applause.

It would be bold indeed on our part to insist that the post-epic Sanskrit Literature blindly following the models crashed headlong into decadence. Literature after all is the production of the poet and the artist. If literature is degraded it only means that it is in the hands of mere pretenders to literary laurels. The form of the epics was retained more because of what it had achieved in its own days than of what it was or would be achieving subsequently. That form had outlived its fresh appeal and its faithful art. The prose attempts of the earlier days culminated in the sūtras developing a technology thus they lost contemporary popular sympathy and ceased to represent popular life. Likewise soon enough, the epic style too developed into a 'science with a technology' and thus restricted it too lost the general sympathy and ceased to represent contemporary social activities and ambitions. Nothing could illustrate this remark better than a casual observation of the monotonous

4 By the 8th century A.D. we come across works supposedly on Rhetorics or literary criticism. It is a pitiful sight of intelligent writers and thinkers wasting themselves on the details of what a hero must be like in a kāvya, how the Kāvya should begin and how it should end, what things are to be described therein and in what sequence and on superficial points *ad nauseum*. Though these works do not appear till the 8th century the views therein were probably being formed a long time before.

the rule bound form of the *Kāvya* that repeated itself through different ages and with different poets. We might take any *Kāvya*—say the *Buddhacarita* of *Asvaghosa* one of the earliest of the Classical period and compare it with any one of the latest—say the *Janakiharana* of *Kumāradasa* of *Ceylon* we will find that essentially there is no difference in the form and the treatment—an identical beginning the same arrangement of (oftentimes the same) ideas facts and fancies and figures of the same tone and touch and so on! There is nothing like a development on the other hand there is a desperate attempt naturally doomed to failure, to preserve the epic model.

It is relieving however to find that imitation is not the only contribution of the post epic period. Every generation has its own ideas and its own ways of expression. The ideas may be based on or borrowed from those of the previous generation, still they appear new either because the generation is new or because the mode of expression is different. The Vedic seers composed their hymns their descendants expressed same or similar ideas but in a different style (i.e. a different point of view) in the epic days the same ideas were arranged in a peculiar form and expressed in a fresh style and similarly the post-epic period introduced beside the epic a literary style of their own where the old old materials were arranged in a new fashion. It should be further noted that almost all the Great Sanskrit writers after the epic have subscribed to this new form testifying at once to the greatness of their own powers and the freshness of the latest style. That style is the form found in Sanskrit dramas.

Superficially speaking the form of Sanskrit dramas is not quite new or original. Instead of the purely prose or the purely poetic style of earlier works these dramas were written partly in prose and partly in verse. Secondly the purpose of the epic viz to turn literature into art—a path of roses to charm and appreciation of joy and Beauty—this purpose was carried into the dramas. What is the artistic purpose or effect of a drama? Bharata in his *Nāṭya Śāstra* gives a frank reply to this question

dukhhārtānām śramārtānām śokārtānām tapasvinām
vīrām janānam loke nāṭyam etad bhaviṣyati
virodha janānam kile nāṭyam etad bhaviṣyati

Drama shall be a comfort an amusement and a refreshment to all

those that are grieved miserable or weary (I 111 b 112 a 117 a)
So does Kālidāsa himself a great dramatist, answer this question.

nāṭyam bhinna rucē janasya bahudhā'pyekam samārāadhanam
' Drama, thought of various types is an entertainment common to
people of different tastes (Mal I 4)

Bhavabhūti another great playwright of later days is still more
explicit on this point

bhūmnā raśānām gahanāḥ prayogāḥ
sauhārda hṛdyāni viceshitaṇi
auddhatyam āyojita kāmasūtram
citraḥ kathā vāci vidagdhatā ca

Sentiments are depicted in all their subtlety the actions are charm-
ing and reasonable there is sense and dignity the plot is unusual
and the dialogue skilful (Such plays alone are considered good
MM. I 6) The protestations of Bhavabhūti are echoed by a later
writer on dramaturgy viz Dhanañjaya the author of *Daśarūpaka*
Drama to him is no class room moral lesson

ānanda nīṣyandiṣu rūpakeṣu
vyutpatti mātram phalam alpabuddhiḥ
yo pīṭhāsādivad āha sadhuḥ
tasmai namaḥ svādūparānmukhāya

Dramatic representations are the pure expressions of Joy the in-
nocent fool who believes that Drama like the study of *Itihāsa* and
others improves only the intellectual outlook has no sense of
Beauty or Enjoyment (D R. I 6) Instances might be multiplied
to show that enjoyment i.e charm and appreciation formed the fore-
most feature of dramas The idea of charm and appreciation as
explained above was first put into practice by the authors of
the epics

Sanskrit dramas copied the epics in another respect. The
outstanding features of the epic style were narration and description
The stories of the *Mahabharata* and the *Rāmāyana* are more human
in outlook and treatment compared with the mythology of the Vedic
hymns or with the Upaniṣadic discussions This introduction of
life like incidents and emotions was retained in the dramas in only as
far as borrowing their plots from or modelling them upon those in
the epics More will be said on this feature in another place. Here

it is mentioned as a sufficient reason to show how classical Sanskrit dramas are indebted to the epics. The indebtedness is so close that when after a time the Nāṭya Śāstra is written the author boasts therein of drama in the same tones in which the Mbh boasts of itself. Bharata says —

na taj jñānam na tacchulpanam na sā vidyā na sā kalā
na sā yogo na tat karma nāṭyesmin yan na dṛśyate
sarvaśāstrāṇi śilpāni karmāṇi vividhāni ca
veda vidyeturhāsānam ākhyānaparikalpanam

There is no knowledge no fine art no learning no skill no yoga and no activity that is not represented in Drama. (Here are) all the Śāstras all the fine arts and actions of diverse nature. In Drama are narrated and represented all the Vedic and all the traditional or legendary lore. (I 114 112b 116b) * Just as Vyāsa wrote the Mbh and trained his disciples to recite it so did Bharata

ākhyāpito viditvā ham nāṭyavedam pitāmahāt
putran adhyāpayam योग्यं प्रयोगं चास्य तत्त्वतः

I learnt this Veda of Dramaturgy from God Brahman and then I taught my sons (or disciples) both its theory and its practice. (I 25)

Thus we see that most of the original features of the epic style are borrowed by the Drama literature. That the Drama should also borrow the tendency to claim a hoary tradition and a perfection in the same tones as the epic is eloquent enough. But that is only half the truth the other half is more important more enlightening and also more refreshing—as it reveals some new features into literature for the first time. Though they form the subject of a detailed study later just one or two of them would be considered here.

The most important and the original feature is the introduction of the Prākṛts. Those who have a historical knowledge of the linguistic development of Sanskrit might question the originality of this feature. Most of the Prākṛts were at one time—probably *after the epics* spoken dialects. To write in a style nearer the spoken one was first attempted by the epics. So why should not one say

5 cf. the famous line in the Mbh

yad ihāsti tad anyatra yan nehāsti na tat kvacit

What is here is elsewhere what is not here cannot be found elsewhere

that even the introduction of the Prākṛts was just a tendency borrowed from the epics? Why not indeed? But the difficulty lies in taking the Prakṛt passages of the available plays as genuine specimens of actually spoken dialects. Originality in this respect concerns more with the boldness of placing these dialects side by side with the sacred tongue. The two Śanskṛit authorities on Dramaturgy have recognised the importance of this innovation. Thus Bharata —

nāṭya yoge tu kartavyam kāvyaṃ bhāṣāsamāśrayam

In a play staged the composition should be based on the *local dialects* (XVIII 43)

The Daśarūpaka too is equally insistent (11-63)

deśa bhāṣā kṛiyā veśā lakṣaṇaḥ syuh pravṛttayaḥ
lokād etadhiḡamyaṇtāḥ yathaucityaṃ prayoḡayet

In all the productions dress actions and speech should be taken directly from the Society and should be properly observed

It would not be unreasonable therefore to believe that the introduction of the Prākṛts was an innovation of the post-epic period

Another important feature of the Drama literature—a feature which is new and original—is the humanising tendency. Though the epics had made literature a source of pleasure and interest to the average readers their success was, due more to the style than to the treatment. The story itself was still fantastic the characters therein were super human heroes semi divine beings or demons of evil and darkness. This element of supernaturalism of the heroic age was retained by the later Kāvya works and to appreciable extent even by the Drama literature. But side by side developed a tendency of turning literature from a mere luxury to a light on life. The ordinary beings with the fun and pain the ideas and idiosyncracies the humours and habits of routine life were utilised by the dramatic artists. Literature was here democratised — so to say. No evidence would be more convincing than the mention of the fact that prakaraṇa—such was the name of one of the earliest forms in Dramatic literature. Let Bharata himself explain what a prakaraṇa is (N S XX) —

yatra kavirātma buddhyā vastu sanirama ca nāṭakam carva
autpattikam prakurute prakaraṇam etad budhair jñeyam (49)
vipra vanik śacivānām purohitaṇmatya sārthavāhānām
caṇitam yad anekavidham tad jñeyam prakaraṇam nama (52)

nodāttanāyakakṛtam na divyācantam na rājasambhogam
 bāhya jana samprayuktam vijñeyam prakaranam tajñaiḥ (53)
 saciva śreṣṭh brāhmaṇa purohitamātya sārthavāhānām
 gṛhavārtā yatra bhavet (55)

Let the wise people know that a prakarana is an original production of a poet dealing with the varied life story of Brahmins tradesmen ambassadors purohits ministers merchants etc. No kings no super human incidents no heroes of an exalted type to be found here. Let the wise know that a prakarana deals with the routine (domestic aspects of an ordinary (bāhyajana) human being. Daśarūpaka more or less repeats these ideas (D R. III 39) and Viśvanātha, too, in his Sāhitya Darpana summarises the same views (S D VI 224). All this is sufficient to show that prakarana was a piece built up by the author's imagination but based on or related to the incidents in the life of an average man no extraordinary situations no super human deeds no exalted powers. Some Sanskrit prakaranas like Śudraka's Mṛcchakatika or Bhavabhūti's Mālaviyā Mādhava may not be all we desire when a play is based on actual social life. What is important is the tendency to bring literature nearer and nearer to everyday life.

We are now in a position to summarise the main tendencies of literary development in Sanskrit. In the Vedic days hymns were sung in honour of baffling super human elements. The feeling behind and the fervour in these hymns were shared by that primitive society as a whole. The rich fancy of the hymns fascinated many a generation following with the result that that fancy was studied at one time and emulated at another. But that feeling and that fervour were now neither fresh nor popular so the study in the Brāhmaṇas and the emulation of the Upaniṣads assumed aristocratic airs and like any aristocracy were out of touch with popular life. The Aryans as a people were still pushing far and wide over India their life was still adventurous. That adventurous life was represented in the epics a glorious life set to enchanting music. The result was so successful that the epics served as literary models for a long time to come extending even to the times when the very life of the epic days loomed past and fantastic. The last stage of our survey covers a field where the epic style was not merely modelled upon but modified to an advantage. That is the field of Dramatic literature.

So far the survey reads like one story. But so many objections can be legitimately directed against it. Can the literary development be traced along the lines suggested above? Can it be shown that the Drama literature comes after the epics and *not at all* before? Were there no dramas before the epics? Questions like these will have to be answered throughout the present work. The question that would face us first is that of the origin of Sanskrit Drama. An answer to that question would meet many of the above and similar objections. So to that question of the origin of Sanskrit Drama we shall now turn.

CHAPTER III

ORIGIN OF SANSKRIT DRAMA

(Traditional)

To the Hindu mind everything except God and the world (samsāra) has a beginning. Moreover the beginning of anything is supposed to be known as certain only when it is traced to God Himself. So we find the Nāṭyaśāstra—the scientific treatise on Drama and Dramaturgy traced traditionally to Brahmā the All Creator. We may be annoyed at such an irresponsible attitude of facetiously tracing all things to God—we may be annoyed but we cannot complain. In one respect, these ancient Indian scholars (called ṛṣis then) have an advantage over the modern Sanskrit scholars. In explaining any phenomenon by tracing it to God the old sages enunciated a theory or an outlook which has been at least silently acquiesced in while the modern scholars in tracing any and every feature of Sanskrit Literature to and from the Vedic period are only raising a dust storm of doubt and indecision. The traditional account as will be presently shown has a style of its own to understand which one has to interpret.

To Bharata Drama has two beginnings one in the divine and the other in the mortal world. Moreover as the treatise deals *with drama on the stage* the origin of Drama means to him the *first performance of the first drama*. The history of this performance, as described in the opening chapters of the Nāṭyaśāstra hence deserves a full summary.

In the old old days when the inhabitants of Jambūdvīpa lived a life not quite a reputable one (grāmyadharmā pravṛtti¹) when towns flourished along with their quarrels and their jealousies (kāmalobha vasam gate) and when luck and lust were rife Indra and other Gods went in deputation to God Brahmā. The good ways of the old world were discredited. To improve the world and its ways they wanted simpler and pleasanter methods. The number of Śūdras low caste people had increased. A Śūdra had no rightful access to the sacred lore or the Vedas. So the Vedas were now

not at all helpful. Why should not Brahmā create a fifth Veda that would be accessible to all irrespective of their caste distinctions? (Sārva varṇukam) Brahmā consented. He made an easy and skilful job of it. With the existing four Vedas as his materials he created the Nāṭya—wherein the text was taken from the Rgveda, the music from the Sāmaveda, the action from the Yajurveda and the rasa from the Atharvaṇa*. It was a silent revolution and was acceptable to both the old and the new worlds. This piece called itihāsa. Indra was asked to produce. Indra however pleaded his inability. Sire the Gods are not able to understand, execute and express this lore. The Gods are not at all suited for Drama*. Thereupon the sage Bharata was entrusted with that task. Bharata soon showed that he deserved this divine compliment. Bharata was a man with a shrewd insight and a practical sense. He had the further advantage of being the father of hundred sons⁵ whom he could coach up with all paternal rigour. But soon he found out that he had to include some ladies as certain parts were impossible to be played by men*. The wise sage did not flinch. On his request Brahmā supplied Apsaras damsels. Then the heavenly musicians like Narada and others were assembled. The play to be produced was The Defeat of the Demons. Naturally the demons took strong objection to it and were wroth that Brahmā should license such a performance likely to disturb the peace of the citizens. The 'open fields' (dhvajamaha)* of Indra made it easy for the opponents to attack and prevent the production. In the interests of safety it was found that a play house well protected by walls on all sides was essential⁹. Later on the demons were pacified by Brahmā who explained to them the nature as well as the purpose and functions of Drama. Here are the eloquent words in which Brahmā pleaded the greatness of Drama.

Why are you so displeased my demon friends? I have created this Nāṭyaveda so that there would be a better mutual under-

2 N S I 17

3 Ibid I 17

4 Ibid I 22

5 Ibid I 24-41

6 Ibid I-46

7 Ibid I 48-50

8 Ibid I 55

9 Ibid I 79-80

standing (karmabhāvānvayāpekṣo) between you and the Gods. It is not a piece of propaganda of any one section. The three worlds shall be described here. There is religion for those who are religious minded, love for those that are amorous minded, knowledge for the ignorant, criticism of the learned a delight to the Gods and a solace to the afflicted. In short, every one will find in Drama just what he needs and what is good for him. It preaches yet delights, it recreates yet it is reasonable, it teaches and yet is broad minded. Where else could you find reason with recreation, knowledge with attraction and morality with beauty?"¹⁰ The demons must have been men with hearts. They were not only pacified but entirely satisfied.

Chapter II of the N S can be passed over in this connection as it merely describes the erection and the details of the nāṭyaveśma—or the play house.¹¹ In the new play house Bharata went through all the preliminary ceremonies (III). By this time the sage had grown wiser by experience and did not revive 'the Defeat of the Demons'. With his band of actors he waited on Brāhmā to receive orders as to which play was to be staged. It was decided to play the 'samavakīra' performance named 'The Nectar Churning (amṛta manthana)'.¹² Brahma was so pleased that he volunteered to introduce the company to God Śiva, and in the presence of the latter a drama performance by name 'the Burning of the Three Forts (tripura dāha)', was given. God Śiva too commended the actors whom he found promising and to make the performance better he undertook the task of personally supervising and introducing dance and music into the show.¹³

Thus does Bharata describe at length and in rapture the first dramatic production under his management. This account has mystified many scholars and many more were justified under the circumstances to dismiss the whole narration as of no historical value. One is rather surprised to find that these scholars should insist that history ought to have been written in those earlier days in the same style as in the modern days. With a little more patience and a more accurate analysis it will be seen that Bharata is not as fantastic as

10 *Ibid* I 102-118

11 For a fuller interpretation of these Chapters see Chapter XX of this work

12 N S IV 1-4

13 *Ibid* IV 10-15

he appears to be Let us only remember that the two first performances are known as *samavakāra* and *ḍima*

The *samavakāra* is defined¹⁴ as follows —

devāsurabīja kṛtam prakhyātodatta nāyakam caiva

A representation wherein the hero is well known and highly placed where the story develops on the fight between the Gods and the demons

What is important from our point of view is the fact that the story *represents* a *fight* How was this fight represented on the stage? The answer to this question is given by Bharata himself in another connexion¹⁵ *Brahmā* the sponsor of Drama was watching a fight between God *Kṛṣṇa* and two demons *Madhu* and *Kaitabha* This fight was fought out by *Kṛṣṇa* successfully but strange to say the success owed itself to *Brahmā*'s direction. The various postures and methods into which the fight developed appealed to *Brahma* from an artistic point of view He was so pleased with the whole show that he immediately set to introduce those postures and methods into his pet fancy viz the *nāṭya* or drama Ultimately he did so in the form of the four *vṛttis* or styles. What are these *vṛttis*? Are they the different methods of representation or are they merely methods under different circumstances? An analysis of the description of these four *vṛttis* might help us to answer this question

(1) First is the *Bhārati vṛtti* taken from the *Rgveda*¹⁶ It is defined as —

*yā vāk pradhānā puruṣa prayojyā
strī varjitā sanskrta vākya yuktā
śānāmādheyair bharataih prayuktā
sā bhāratī nāma bhavet tu vṛttih*¹⁷

It consists of mere speeches or recitation and is only played by men There are to be no ladies at all The language here is Sanskrit and the actors represent it under their own names Here there is *no representation*, so to say There are *no made up* roles as the (supposed) actors are to speak and act under their own

14 *Ibid* XX. 66

15 *Ibid* XXII 1 22

16 *Ibid* XXII 24

17 *Ibid* XXII 25

nares It is merely recitational since it is taken from the Rg Vedic hymns And there was no place for ladies at all

(ii) Next comes the Sātvatī vṛtti

vagangābhūnayavatī sattvotthana vacana prakaraṇeṣu
sattvādhukārayuktā vijñeyā satvatī vṛttih ¹⁸

Whenever there is an emotional context it is accompanied by speech and acting if in addition there is an abundance of sattva it is the Sātvatī vṛtti. What Sattva is is explained by Bharata in another place.¹⁹ It is defined as

avyakta rūpam sattvam hi jñeyam bhavarasasrayām
yathasthana rasopetam romāñcāsrādibhir gunaiḥ

It is something subtle and clever on which depends the proper representation of sentiments and feelings i.e. where there is acting as we know it. This vṛtti is apparently taken from the Yajurveda. Here there is recitation as well as acting. As the author speaks of rasa it is probable that the actors were expected to reveal the supposed effects of the actions by tears etc.

(iii) The third vṛtti is the Karsikā

ṣā ślakṣna nepathya viśeṣa citrā
strī samyuta ṣā bahu nṛtta gitā
kamopabhoga prabhavopacarā
tām karsikā vṛttim udaharanti ²⁰

There are females in the representation, plenty of music and dance representation of love-affairs and lastly there is beautiful dressing up (Ślakṣna nepathyaviśeṣa citrā). Three points in this definition deserve to be noticed (a) presence of actress (b) dance and music and (c) impersonation. The first two are closely related to each other nay it appears each is essential for the other. For in the very first chapter Bharata says —

karsikā ślakṣna nepathya śṛṅgāra rasa sambhavā
asakṣā puruṣaḥ sadhu prayoktum sthajanāid ite ²¹

18 Ibid XII 39

19 Ibid XXIV 3

20 Ibid XII 47

21 Ibid XII 57

The Kai-ikī dealing with Love and requiring beautiful dressing is impossible to be staged by men without women I-46

(iv) The last vṛtti is the Ārabhaṭī

prastāva pāta pluta langhātānī
cānyānī māyākr̥tam indrajālam
citrānī yuktānī ca yatra nityam
tam tādṛśīm ārabhaṭīm vadanti

Where there are various kinds of music flight dance magic etc represented regularly It should be noted that herein we find some permanent setting (yatra nityam) i.e. some sort of stage equipment which would help an honest representation of the various actions

Without going into further details the four vṛttis might be summarised as under --

- (i) Bhārati or purely recitational
- (ii) Satvati or recitation and acting
- (iii) Kai-ikī or impersonation with music and dance and
- (iv) Arabhaṭī or a true-to-life representation on an equipped stage.

If we remember that during Kṛṣṇa's fight with the demons Brahmā observed the four vṛttis in the same order as mentioned so far and introduced them likewise in the nāṭya would we not be justified in believing that the four vṛttis are not merely four varieties of representation but a progressive chain in four stages? Does not the opening account of Bharata as described above bear out this belief? The first performance was a Samavahara named The Nectar-churning It must have been a pure recitation a description with probably no device to represent the action

Dima

The second performance was a *dima* which has been defined as one where the story and the hero are well known.

māyendra jala bahulo bahu puruṣottmāna bhedasamyuktah
devū ura rāḥ a-a bhūta yak a nāga- ca puruṣāḥ svuh

Where there is a great number of male characters and a good deal of make believe etc. The make believe is probably the *vagan gabhinaya* i.e. the bodily movements of the Sātvatī vṛtti. Without repeating, one thing has to be naturally insisted upon here. The information of the Nāṭyaśāstra may not contain facts but there is no harm (why, there is more reason) in believing that the work at the worst attempts to preserve a tradition. In doing this it describes the different trends in the development of Drama as a representation. Its vocabulary and its technique of description are peculiar to the age. The treatise might be one fairly late. But would that fact alone be a sufficient argument to show that even the tendencies and the tradition preserved therein belong to the latest age?

There is another reason in not disbelieving the above account so hastily. A critical arrangement and a reasonable interpretation of the facts would reveal some interesting points. To those we shall now turn. To render the discussion more intelligible we shall first mention the three points that emerge from the traditional account.

(i) The credit for the first production of a dramatic representation belongs to one Bharata.

(ii) A consistent attempt has been made throughout to establish a connexion between the nāṭya and the four Vedas and

(iii) with reference to the Bhāratī vṛtti a probable evolution from dumb show to a dramatic representation has been hinted at.

We shall now consider these points one by one.

CHAPTER IV

WHO IS BHARATA ?

Bharata tradition tells us is the originator of Drama. He is the Prometheus of the Drama world. Like so many other men of genius of the primitive days Bharata is placed behind a mist like halo. The difficulty is not so much in finding out when and where Bharata lived as in acknowledging that he was a real living person. Bharata is a name well known to the Hindu tradition. In the Vedic days Bharata was a name of one of the Vedic tribes. Secondly 'Bharata' was supposed to be the name of a king (son of Śakuntalā and Duryanta) who became the first Emperor (Sarvabhauma). Thirdly Bharata is the name of a sage the traditional author of the Nāṭyaśāstra (not to be confused with the originator of Dramatic Representation). And lastly in the N. S. itself the word *bharata* is used in the sense of an actor.

Under these circumstances it is not easy to determine who the Bharata mentioned in connection with the Nāṭyaśāstra is. The first two meanings viz. that of a tribe and that of the name of a king have been entirely ruled out by scholars. As regards the others scholars have not been able to determine (1) whether Bharata was a mystical sage postulated by the actors themselves who were called *bharata* and/or (2) whether Bharata was a real person in honour of whose initiative enterprise the actors were called *bharata*.¹

That the insistence of scholars is not so well placed will be noticed on a closer examination of the facts. Why should the word *bharata* mean a sage or an actor when neither sense would suit the context? That neither of the meanings suits the context is plain enough. That a mythical sage should write the Nāṭyaśāstra does not appeal to a reasonable mind. That actor or actors should write it does not answer the common sense point of view. Besides the other meanings of that word do not seem to have been carefully considered.

1. cf. The treatise which goes by his (Bharata's) name is very prolix and may be an amplification of the Bhārata sūtras which are lost. It is to these sūtras or stage directions for the use of *bharatas* or actors that Bharata owes his imaginary existence. *Ind. Theatre* p. 30.

Bharata as mentioned above is the name of a Vedic tribe. In the N S itself the bharatas are referred to collectively as the sons of Bharata. The literary tradition of the Vedic Aryans is the first reason for such a belief. We know how the authorship of the various Vedic hymns and mandalas had been ascribed to a family, a clan and so on but least to one individual². The mandala VII of the R V for example claims the authorship of the Vasīṣṭhas i.e. of persons whose family name was Vasīṣṭha. Similarly could not the Bharata of the Nāṭyaśāstra be a family and not an individual³? As a matter of fact, in N S I are mentioned the hundred sons of Bharata and they are mentioned again in N S XXXVI.

On this supposition much of the traditional account could be reasonably explained. At the beginning it was the Bharata family that was responsible for first introducing the art of dramatic representation. As belonging to the Vedic Aryans it was a family of talents and tradition. A time came however when the Bharata family lost its prestige and powers and privileges. Nowhere is it so difficult to continue the family traditions as in arts of instinct. Owing to the questionable attitudes and behaviour of Bharata's sons the very art was threatened with destruction⁴. Luckily for Bharata a king by name Nahuṣa came into power over the divine kingdom. This Nahuṣa patronised Bharata and his sons and Drama has been firmly established ever since.

The above narration is highly instructive. In the first place, it gives us an idea about a family known as Bharata. This family must have been highly cultured, intelligent and respectable⁵. The fact that other vedic sages cursed the misbehaving sons of Bharata suggests that that was a vedic family⁶. How sincerely pained must have been these other vedic families when they found a family of their own blood and traditions resorting to vulgar ways like dancing and singing—not in honour of the Gods but to please a vulgar crowd! It is curious that a votary of Dramatic Art should be held in contempt and derision in all climes and at all times. Is it a universal conspiracy of dull minds against daring of slovenly self-deception?

2 N S I 26-36 XXXVI 29

3 C H 9 Vol I p 77

4 For further details in this connexion see and compare the account in the next chapter.

5 Cf N S I 22

6 Cf *Ibid* XXXVI 33-35 and the next Chapter of this work.

tion against searching self knowledge of instinctive animal spirits against inspired art ? If we mention that as late as the XVI century and in a country where Shakespeare was still living actors were classed as vagabonds it is only to illustrate a universal tendency. In India, too from the very early times there is evidence to show a similar state of affairs. In one of the earliest treatises on sociology and politics viz the *Arthashastra* ascribed to Kautilya singing and dancing are mentioned among the duties of a *Śūdra*.⁷ Similarly according to the sage *Manu* a man conversing with another man's wife commits an offence and is liable to a fine but there is an exception. Any one can talk with an actor's wife and no offence is committed ! Actors and their wives are so immoral that the question of their moral sentiments being offended does not arise at all

naiva cārana-dāreṣu vidhūr nātmopajīvrū
sajjayanta hi te nānṛ nṛgūdhās cārayanti te.⁸

This law does not refer to the wives of actors or to those that maintain themselves by selling their body. They are procurers and work in secrecy.⁹

The higher in art, the lower in life—has been the thumb-and-rule dictum of Society and the Vedic sages had every human reason to be enraged with Bharata and his sons. The consequence could be easily anticipated. The Bharatas should either recant or should forfeit their Vedic prestige and privileges. Luckily for their art the Bharatas were unrepentant. They chose to leave the neighbourhood of their Vedic brethren. They suffered not for this love of their art for soon enough the royal patronage of Nahuṣa was extended to them. Who is this Nahuṣa ? We do not know for certain. What we do know is that from the Vedic days he is a sore to the eyes of the Aryans. He is the fiend whom Indra the beloved hero of the Vedic tribes attacks.

sa nṛtamo nahuṣo arnat-sujātaḥ
puro abhinat ārahan dasyu hatye.

7 *Śūdrasya dvijāti-śūdrāṣā vārtā kārū kuṣīlava karma ca.* *Prakaraṇa I* Chap III

8 *M. S. VIII 362.*

9 "Cārana" mentioned in this verse—has the highest status in the dramatic world as a singer and a dancer. *na hi cāryā vinā kinon nāṭye hyangam pravartate*—without dance, says Bharata the dramatic art cannot exist. *N. S. XI 6*

Strong glorious manhest, for us he shattered the forts of Nahuṣa, when he slew the Dasyus ¹⁰

This Nahuṣa may be an individual or for all we know that word may be the name or nickname of a non Aryan tribe. That the sage Agastya had a feud with Nahusa shows that the locality of the latter was somewhere about the Vindhya range of mountains¹¹ The Bharata tribe from the Vedic days wandered now in power now in obscurity from the Punjab to the Kurukṣetra where their eastward migration was obstructed by the Kurus and then from Kurukṣetra probably south west (through the modern Rajputana) to Vindhya¹² where it earned the favour of the non Aryan Nahusa

To return to the word *bharata*. From the foregoing it seems reasonable to believe that the Bharata mentioned in connexion with the Nāṭyaśāstra is the name of a Vedic tribe. But there are passages in the Nāṭyaśāstra where the word *bharata* is used not merely in the sense of a family name or in the sense of the family members (which naturally came to mean actors) but in a still wider significance. Now says Bharata¹³ I shall mention the list of *bharatas* The scene setter the *dūṣaka* (*Vidūṣaka*?) the musician, the dancer the stage manager the producer the dresser the florist the painter the washerman the artisans etc—these are all *bharatas* since they supply (Skt. root *bhṛ*) the various materials required for a performance

A careful perusal of these passages would reveal the fact that a *bharata* (or a *bhārata* XXXV 69) is not so much an actor as one of the Managers or workers of the whole show from erecting a stage to the stage-worship just before a play begins. No other sense could be more suitable since Bharata and his family were not actors but managers and producers¹⁴

10 R. V. X. 99 vii (Griffiths translation) For some other details see the following chapter of this work.

11 For the locality of Agastya and his feud with Nahuṣa see Mbh. Adiparvan Chapter 94 102 157 and 207

12 C. H. I Vol I p 188

13 N. S. XXXV 66-69

14 Note in this connection that in some later plays like the *Vepi-sambhāra* and *Prasanna Rāghava* the *Sūtradhāra* is addressed as *bharata* in the prologue

Thus the word *bharata* in the Nāṭyaśāstra refers in the first instance to some members and descendants of a clan or family of that name. This family was the first sponsor and manager of Dramatic Representation. Either the family heritage was lost or the family ceased for reasons suggested above to be recognised as a family. After some time *bharata* meant anyone and everyone who sponsored the art and managed or took part in the production

CHAPTER V

RELIGION AND DRAMA

The meaning of the word *bharata* as decided in the preceding chapter raises some very inconvenient problems. Those scholars who see in Bharata—the supposed author of the N S—only a mythical being easily dismiss the claim of that treatise to any authoritative ness. Hence, according to them the origin of Dramatic Representation as narrated in the N S is a further myth woven round the name of the mythical Bharata. On the other hand those scholars have their own theory about the origin of Sanskrit Drama—a theory which is free from any mention of Bharata. The origin of Sanskrit Drama, they say is to be sought in the primitive religious rites. With the progress of research work this theory has been slightly modified. The older theory traces the origin definitely to the Vedic religious performances. The lack of accurate data precludes our knowing much about the origin of the drama in India but it is probable that it had its beginning in a combination of these hymns in a dramatic and in the religious dances in which certain pantomimic features came to be conventionalized and stereotyped in later times until we get the classical Sanskrit Drama. This theory is borne out by the fact that in Sanskrit the words for play (*nāṭaka*) and actor (*nata*) are from the root *nat* which is the Prākṛt form of Sanskrit *nṛt*—to dance.¹ As a corollary to this theory arose that of the probable borrowing of the Drama form in India from the Greeks with whom Drama definitely evolved out of the religious rites.²

A modified version of the above theory is proposed by Professor A. B. Keith. The phrase Sanskrit Drama, he insists should be

1 Bib Skt. Drama 1906 Intro p 1. Also cf. The *soma* sacrifice which gave rise to Maṇḍala IX of the Rgveda is also associated with the oldest *prahasanas*. They were boisterous farces, rough and gruff like the rumbling and grumbling thunderstorm. *The Ind Theatre* op cit. p 173 footnote.

The earliest specimens of *Bhāṇas* in Sanskrit literature are monologues of a ruined gambler R. V X 34 and of *Drunken Irda* *ibid* p 175 footnote.

2 Brit Drama p 15

understood only in the sense of a conscious representation on an equipped stage. From this point of view, to quote the learned scholar at length—when we leave out of account the enigmatic dialogues of the Rgveda we can see that the Vedic ritual contained within itself the germs of drama *as is the case with practically every form of primitive worship*. The ritual did not consist merely of the singing of songs or recitations in honour to the Gods—it involved a complex round of ceremonies in some of which there was undoubtedly present the element of dramatic representation i.e. the performances of the rites assumed for the time being personalities others than their own.³

On the contrary there is every reason to believe that it was through the use of the epic recitations that the latent possibilities of drama were evoked and the literary form created.⁴ On these views the writer concludes that Sanskrit Drama originated with the Kṛṣṇa legends during the second century B.C.⁵

All this would tempt one to believe that the origin of Sanskrit Drama ultimately goes back to religious performances Vedic or epic. The views of these profound scholars cannot be easily dismissed—not even on the ground that as foreigners they do not always have first hand knowledge and experience of Hindu tradition and mentality. The attempt to connect Sanskrit Drama with some or other aspect of the Vedic life or literature is not quite foreign in its origin. Even Bharata as explained in the last chapter mentions that the N S was created as the fifth Veda—that the text was taken from R V the music from the S V the action from the Y V and the rasa from the A V. Secondly in connection with the rise of the four *utis* (NS XX) the fight of Kṛṣṇa with the demons Madhu and Kaitabha is mentioned as the source. Thus on authorities Indian and European it appears as if the question of the origin of Sanskrit Drama is settled once for all. It would have been were certain doubts removed by the proposed vedic or epic religious origin. In the first place the mere mention of the N S as the fifth Veda or of the fact that the elements of drama were taken out of the four vedas is of no importance in itself. It has been the age long tendency of the Hindu mind to trace back everything to the Vedas. Just as a Hindu king would be satisfied to learn that the blood in his veins

3 Skt. Drama, p 23 Italics ours.

4 Ibid p 27

5 Ibid p 45

has flown direct from a vedic personage so the average Hindu has satisfaction to know that the beliefs and actions of his are exactly those mentioned in the Vedas. Every new school of thought in India has striven to claim and establish for itself the sanction of the vedic texts. So a statement of the kind under question is more a tribute to the sanctity and hold of the Vedas than a reference to a fact.

The Western scholars are on another plane. The facts mentioned by them are usually unquestionable but oftentimes the conclusions reached by them would not accord with the facts. Though such latter cases are very few indeed the origin of Sanskrit Drama is one of them though best equipped to know the facts it is most natural for these scholars to ignore the feelings behind them. Thus a connection between religious performances and dramatic representation is a probability to them not because there are all the stronger reasons for it in India but that such has been the case in civilisations more intimately connected with their own. In Greece, for example both comedy and tragedy took their rise from religious ceremonial. From a common chant the ceremonial soon developed into a primitive *duologue* between a leader and the chorus. The song became elaborated it developed narrative elements and soon reached a stage in which the duologue told in primitive wise some story of the deity. Similar circumstances obtained even in England. The very Mass itself is an effort in this direction. The whole of this service with its accompanying ritual is a symbolic representation of the most arresting episodes in the life of Christ and it is but natural that the clergy should have attempted to make it even more outwardly symbolic as the knowledge of Latin among ordinary people passed further and further into the background.⁶

Such authoritative remarks show us the reasonableness of the connexion between Religion and Drama. But the difficulty in the case of India is the different state and the different course of her religion. The days of Greece were the days of democracy while in the theory of Christianity every member of that religion had a kind of natural and equal status. In both these cases religion and religious ceremonies involved a free mixing on a large scale of all the followers. But in India it has been different from the very beginning. In religion as well as in social life both in theory and in practice, there

6 Brit. Drama p 15

7 Ibid p 20

has been an assertive superiority (and a graded segregation) of the learned over the ignorant of the ruler over the ruled of the Aryans over the non Aryans and later still of the Brahmin over the so-called lower castes. Religious performances were rarely communal in the sense of a social gathering they were the monopoly of Brahmins at first and of a priest-class later and others were practically barred from an active participation. The Vedic hymns were declared un-touchable to any except Brahmins or Priests. As a result these hymns became the property of pedantic scholars interested more than anything in hair splitting interpretations. There was nothing popular about such a development. The ignorant and the lower castes played no part in social or cultural life. And Drama we are told originated for such persons and purposes

na veda vyavahāro yam samśrāvyam sūdra jātiṣu
tasmāt sṛjāparam vedam pañcamam sārva-varṇikam.⁸

These Vedic texts (or practices) are not to be heard by (i.e. are not accessible to) the Sudras create a new and a fifth Veda accessible to all the castes

In answer to this prayer of the Gods Brahmā created Drama. It is interesting to note that everything connected with Drama is associated with lower castes. It so happened the N. S. tells us that the sons of Bharata became too arrogant on account of their dramatic art. The traditional sages resented and cursed every one of them.

You shall lose your art since you are so arrogant and ill-mannered. You shall lose the Brahmin culture and shall take to the ways of the Śūdras. We hereby degrade you to the Śūdra status. Your descendants shall be perpetually born into the Śūdra caste.⁹ Not only the Art and advocates but even the first patron of Drama was an anti Vedic if not a non Aryan King. King Nahuṣa whom we know from the early Vedic days¹⁰ and who figures even in the epic literature¹¹ is spoken of as the first patron of drama in the mortal world.¹² His very name *na hut* (non sacrificer) speaks of anti Vedic tendencies and his quarrels with the Gods and the Brahmins are handed down in legendary lore.

8 N. S. I 12

9 N. S. XXXVI 34-37

10 See Vedic Index under Nahuṣa

11 MBH III 183

12 N. S. XXXVI 48 ff

From the foregoing discussions it seems likely that Sanskrit Drama has least to do with religion or religious rites that it is the work of people treated as anti Vedic if not as non Aryan fiends and that its origins are to be sought in the interests of the lower castes and its patron in a king—a non Aryan adventurer

Before hastening to any conclusion from the above deductions, we shall deal with a point which is also likely to suggest a popular non religious origin of Sanskrit Drama That point concerns itself with dumb shows

CHAPTER VI

DUMB SHOW AND DRAMATIC REPRESENTATION

Drama to Bharata means a representation by means of speeches and actions. Mere imitation it seems is not admitted by Bharata as drama unless it is followed by words and actions for he speaks of drama in these words

evam budhah param bhavam so-muti manasā smaran
vāg anga gatī līlabhūṣeṣṭabhisca samacaret (XXXV 14)

When by means of gestures physical and verbal a clever actor identifies himself with the person and the situation he represents

With these views of his Bharata can never be expected to subscribe to the view that drama originated in a puppet or a pantomime show. No doubt, we can believe the existence in ancient India of such shows. Even in the modern days the Indian villagers have retained the puppet shows probably in the same form in which they must have existed then. Thus we read in the Mahābhārata

yatha dārumayim yojām narah sthira samāhūtah
ingayatyangam angāni tathā rajann imāḥ prajāḥ¹

Just as a man without moving himself moves the wooden dolls so Oh King does the Lord with each and every being

Further we have the view of some scholars who hold that the Sūtradhāra or the stage manager in Sanskrit plays is an evidence of earlier puppet shows (Skt. *sūtra* a thread hence Sūtradhāra means one who holds the thread or the agent behind the puppet shows). Prof. Keith seems to recognise such a stage in the evolution of Sanskrit Drama. We seem in fact² says he to have in the Mahābhāṣya evidence of a stage in which all the elements of a drama were present we have acting in dumb show if not with words also. Lastly Bharata himself may be said to suggest an origin from such dumb shows when as already described he traces the four *vṛttis* of a drama to a fight between Kṛṣṇa and the demons. Thus it would appear

1 Quoted by Madhva in his *Brahma Sutra Bhāṣya* II : 24

2 Skt Drama p 36

that later dramatic representation originated, as likely as not, from puppet and dumb shows or from recitational shows based on them.

There are however obvious miscalculations in such a hypothesis. We are not quite so sure if the puppet shows were a regular amusement. We have no reference in the two Sanskrit authorities on dramaturgy the N S and the D R—to the puppet shows nor is there any indication thereof either. On the other hand it might be argued—and not unreasonably—that the puppet shows were merely the substitute of the populace for the dramatic luxury of the intellectuals. Even Bharata's account of the four *artus* from recitation to representation might not be referring to Vedic recitations or to God and demon fights. Lastly the significance of the word Sūtradhāra seems to have been missed. If the Sūtradhāra were doll dancer of the popular puppet shows his name would most likely have descended to us in Prākṛt or some other non Sanskrit form. In contrast to that of the word naṭi (see Chap VIII below) the form of the word

Sūtradhāra is Sanskrit. There are some indications in earlier literature which show that the word 'Sūtradhāra' was coined for purposes quite different. In the first book of the Mahābhārata King Janamejaya is about to perform a sacrifice. The sacrificial ground had to be prepared. In that context we read

sthapatir buddhisampanno vīstu vidyā visaradaḥ
ityabravīt sūtradhārah sūto paurāṇikas tadā³

Then the Sūta Paurāṇika who was an expert on land and building the sūtradhāra said thus

The Paurāṇika Suta is here said to be an expert on land and sculpture and along with this he is called a sūtradhara. Why? The next line gives a sufficient clue to the answers

yaśmin deśe ca kale ca māpaneyam pravartitam

The time and the place where the measurements were to be taken

It seems that the Suta was a man who used to measure out the grounds for sacrificial purposes. For this work of an expert he was called a śilpāgamavettā (Cf the commentary on the above verse.) That an expert on Śilpa—sculpture was called a Sūtradhāra could be said with greater justification on the authority of some other

references as the one from Act II of *Mudra Rakṣasa*. At the time of Candraguṭa's entry into the palace all the *Sūtradhāras* of the capital were commanded by Cāṇakya to decorate the streets as far as the palace gates. The more we read the word *Sūtradhāra* in this context the more are we convinced that a *Sūtradhāra* was more than a carpenter and had something to do with land and building. It was on account of this work that he was called a *Sūtradhāra* i.e. one who holds out a thread. He took the measurements of the ground by means of a thread. And if we are to believe it, Bharata says the same thing when he describes that a ground for an auditorium and a stage has to be set apart. We have already described how owing to the obstruction of the demons a *nāṭyaveṣṭa* i.e. a play house was found an essential prerequisite to Bharata the Producer. The ground had to be measured out; the process is described to be very delicate and dangerous so an expert had to be called in. This was the *Sūta* already referred to in the *Mbh.* as the *Sūtradhāra*.

puṣya nakṣatra yoge 'tu suklam sūtram prasārayet.

A white piece of thread should be stretched out at (the auspicious time of) the conjunction of *puṣya*.⁴

This is one of the reasons why the *Sūtradhāra* enters at the very opening of a play. In the passage from the *Mbh.* quoted above he is also called a *Sthāpati*—one who arranges the ground plot. Probably on this analogy the prologue in early plays is called a

Sthāpana. The *Sūta* is the *Sūtradhāra*, the work of the *Sthāpati* is the *Sthāpanā*.

If thus the *Sūtradhāra* or the *Sthāpati* is the *Sūta* himself we shall have to modify our views about the origin of dramatic representation. The puppet shows would now be thrown into the background and our search will have to follow the footsteps of the *Sūta*. The *Sūta* as mentioned already was a professional reciter. As time went on this recitation might naturally have been accompanied by music and instruments. From the fanciful account in the *N. S.*⁵ it appears probable that a musician and an instrumentalist were somehow called *kuśilava*. It should be noted in this connection that the epic *Rāmāyaṇa* of *Vālmīki* was sung before Rāma to the accompaniment of musical instrument. The two singers—the sons of Rāma

4. *N. S.* II 28 of the verses following also in this connection.

5. *nānītodyavidhāne prayogavuktah pravādane kuślah*. One who is an expert in playing on various musical instruments. *XXXV* 84.

a, yet unrecognised by the latter—were Kusa and Lava by name. In any case we might well understand the Sūta being accompanied by the Kuśilavas, so much so that at the stage of dramatic representation when the Suta turned into a Sutradhara the Kuśilavas turned into paripārśvakas i.e., those who kept by the side of Sūtradhāra and played music.

Acceptance of the above suggestions would lead us back to a reconsideration of the four *vytis* mentioned by Bharata. It was the Suta, the wandering minstrel, who must have been responsible by accident or through experience for the introduction of Dramatic Representation. Alone he could only recite. In the company of the Kuśilavas he might seek the aid of the latter either by way of a kind of chorus or by actually helping him with certain portions in the recitation. The form of the two epics was specially favourable to such a division of labour. The major part of the Mahābhārata and a fairly good portion of the Rāmāyaṇa are composed of dialogues. So the Suta and the Kuśilavas could carry on the dialogue with greater effect. In the form of the epics there is no mention in the body of the verses as to who is speaking. Outside the verses we have sub-headings as Yudhiṣṭhira uvāca Suta uvāca Draupadī uvāca (Y said S said D said) and so on. In a representation such a sub-heading was not necessary. At the very commencement of the recitation the Sūta would announce the rôles to be played. Curiously enough in many of the existing plays we have an identical circumstance where the Sutradhāra tells the audience then and there the role he is going to assume. Thus in the prologue to the Mṛcchakaṭika the Sutradhāra says *eso'smi bhoh kār्याvat prayoḡava at ca prākṛta bhāṣa samvṛttah*. Here sirs I am going to speak in Prakṛt because of my part to be played. A more interesting reference is in the plays of Bhavabhūti—interesting because Bhavabhūti has a first hand experience of the actors.⁶ The Sutradhāra in the U R says *eso'smi bhoh kār्याvaśad āyodhyikas tadanantīna-ca samvṛttah*. Here I have turned myself for the action of the play into a citizen of Ayodhya of Rama's days. Similarly at the end of the prologue to MM the Sutradhāra and his friend

6 Bhavabhūti is described as *nirarga sauhṛdena bhāratēṣu vartamā naḥ* who lived naturally attracted in the company of actors. (Prologue MM) *kvair mītradhēyam āmakam* the poet is our personal friend says the Sutradhāra (Prologue M V C)

assumes then and there the rôles of Kāmandaki and Avalokitā respectively

There is one more reason to hold that the Sūtradhāra is the original Sūta. In almost all the plays it is the Sūtradhāra that introduces to the audience the life and lineage of the dramatist. In the earlier days this was one of the duties of the Sūta who had to study and describe the life and lineage of gods, sages, kings and great men. No one was more fitted for the task.

It was thus the post-epic Sūta and not the puppet shows that originated dramatic representation: the recitation of the epic and not that of religious hymns is the Bharatī stage; the recitation of the sūta and the kuśilavas the Sātvatī stage; in the Kāśikā vṛtti the dancer nāṭī was introduced; the Arabhaṭī is the final mode of 'full dress' staging and from its beginning to its death Sanskrit drama took its hero from the Sūta and the epics that he recited and never from the religious lore or from the host of Vedic gods.

CHAPTER VII

ORIGIN OF SANSKRIT DRAMA

(Conclusion)

We are now in a position to view the question of the origin of Sanskrit Drama from a broader view point. It should be remembered that by drama in this connection is meant dramatic representation. In the first place the chief person connected with the representational form of drama is the Sūta who had achieved great reputation soon after the epics. This Suta was a professional reciter par excellence. In course of time he gathered round him two or more musicians and instrumentalists. In the early days the Sūta could be expected to represent dramatically the traditional and the mythological episodes which it was his profession to learn and recite. We have shown in an earlier place¹ that the word *nataka* originally meant only the representation of traditional or mythological episodes. There is an interesting passage in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* which throws some light on the initial stages of such representation. With reference to *nāṭaka* and *prakarana*—two early varieties of drama—a big number of characters is prohibited

na mahājana parivāram kartavyam nātakam prakaranam va
ye tatra kāryāḥ puruṣāḥ catvarah pañca vā te syuh

In a *nāṭaka* or *prakarana* it is not advisable to have a crowd of characters. Four or five would do. The Suta and his musical friends were perhaps to answer for this small number of characters.

Thus did Sanskrit Drama originate soon after the epics. But before it assumed its rightful place as one of the most simple and straightforward means of expression and education and entertainment it had to fight a hard hard battle. To start with the chief person connected with drama was the Sūta, a man of respectable tradition but of inferior blood.² Even the Vedic traditions condemned the

1 Chapter III

2 N. S. X. 40

3 In the laws of Manu the Suta is classed as a *carṇḍala*, the ancestor of the modern untouchables. X. 26

Sūta after a time to a degraded position⁴. The legend in the NS of the Bharatas cursed to a Sūdra status tells the same tale in the language of a different generation.

Even popular sympathy would not carry with it the Sūta and his band. Soon after the epics came the Emperor Aśoka under whose reign all kinds of amusements were banned. It is more than probable that in his Girnar Rock Edict I King Asoka refers by the word *samāja* to an audience or assembly such as that entertained by the Sūta. King Priyadasi sees many dangers in a *Samāja*

bahukam hi dosam samājahma pasati devanam piyo priyadasi rajā says the emperor. We do not say the word *samāja* refers only to dramatic representation⁵ however we would insist that the idea of a *Samāja* does include the audience of a dramatic representation. Even in later Sanskrit plays we find an audience usually addressed as *pariśad* an assembly (of connoisseurs). That at some time, the Sūta addressed such *pariśads* open of course to the general public of taste is obvious from the vehement attack in the laws of Manu against such *pariśads* conducted by the Sūta and composed of persons not soaked with Vedic lore.

*avratanam amantrānām jatimātropajivinām
sahasrasah sametānam pariśattvam navidyate⁶*

Even thousands would not constitute a *pariśad* if they are un disciplined un initiated and if they make it a *profession of inattention*.

In some of the later plays the words *Samāja* and *Samājika* are used in the sense of an audience and a member of an audience respectively. It could be added without hesitation that the words *Samāja* and *Pariśad* are synonymous in this respect. In the *Malav* of Kālidasa the hero-king has to watch the dancing performance of *Mālavika*. (Act I) Let us be *samājika*s (*devī samājika bhavamahi*) says he to the queen. Similarly in the Prologue to the *Rat* of Śrī Harṣa the Sutrādhara says that he has attracted the attention of the *samājika*s i.e. audience (*aye, avarjitani*

4 cf C H I Vol I p 297

5 Dr Woolner's edition

6 Vide *Samāja* in the Glossary *ibid*

7 Cf *abhirupa bhuyiṣṭhā pariśad* *ityam* this house mostly consists of experts (Prologue A Śak)

8 M S XII 114

sakala samajikanam manānsa iti me nācayah) In the Prologue to Jayadeva's Prasanna Rāghava likewise the Sūtradhāra sees his actor friend coming from through the audience with a message from the latter—*nam etad abhisamdhānād eva sāmajika samājād ito bhīyartate sakhā me ranga tarangah*) The actor friend comes in and says—*Sir the audience (sāmajikāh) send you this instruction through me (bhāva idam manmukhena eva bhavantam udīrayanti sāmājikah)* These and many other references of the kind would bear out the interpretation of the word *samaja* as the audience of a dramatic performance. Such *samajas* were prohibited by the Emperor who ruled over the largest Indian Empire in history. Could we believe as history would have us believe in all such cases that the *samajas* flourished for the simple reason that they were prohibited? Any healthy institution in history that has been attempted to be suppressed by royal or religious rigour has either run underground into uncouth uncultivated hands or rubber like has bounced with doubled vigour and vivacity. Nothing more natural then than that the *samājas* should have persisted—though in constant fear of the authorities. There was however a greater chance for such *samājas* to flourish in those parts of the Empire where Asoka's power only hung like a shadow. Thus in southern as well as in western India could be expected a survival of and an encouragement to the *samājas*. History has some evidence to show that Sanskrit was patronised more and more in the west and in the south soon after as well as during Asoka's reign. This is the beginning of the revival of Sanskrit which culminated in the shifting of the centre of culture and learning to Ujjain in the west. Most of the kings that patronised this revival were either the non-Aryan Kings in the south or the later non-Indian invaders in the west of India. We have already mentioned how the Bharatas wandered through the modern Rajputana to the south of India. If in these circumstances Bharata says that King Nahusa is the first patron he has more reasons to say so and more cleverness in saying it.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EARLY STAGES OF THE DEVELOPMENT

(*Sūtradhāra nāṭī prastāvanā and sthāpanā*)

In the preceding chapter we saw in connection with the origin of Sanskrit Drama the importance of the Sūta who later on came to be recognised in the dramatic world as the Sūtradhāra. As a matter of fact in all the Sanskrit plays available the first character to appear on the stage is the Sūtradhāra. We shall here attempt to sketch the career of the Sūtradhāra in the world of dramatic performances.

As already mentioned the Sūtradhāra is usually accompanied by the musicians. It is not, however necessary that it must be *always* so. Whether he is alone or whether he is in the company of the musicians and the dancers his one function is to introduce the piece of performance to the (as he always says it learned) audience. After performing the usual worshipping ceremony (not necessarily in the presence of the audience) he steps on the stage and informs the audience of the play and its contents. Remembering the fact that in the earlier days it was the Sūta himself who did this work in his recitation we need not expect him any and every time, to introduce his subject or to explain the context and so on. The earliest representational form did not require any such intermittent introductions. Therein the story as well as the hero were too well known.¹ The various episodes and legends of the epics were already too popular to need description. contemporary episodes and events would not as well need any separate mention and thus in the earliest plays the Sūtradhāra entered the stage just formally to initiate the play. In the existing Sanskrit plays this feature can be observed very frequently. Wherever the story and the characters are too well known the Sūtradhāra merely mentions them. In the Aśak of Kālidāsa for example the story is a traditionally popular one. The Sūtradhāra merely mentions the title and the story is immediately known to the audience. Where however the story is

1 Cf. the definition of nāṭaka in N. S. 11. 10 prakhyāta nāṭaka prakhyāta va. tu viśaya well known hero well known plot.

not so universally known he describes it for the audience. A good example is the *Mrch* of *Śūdraka*. Here the *Sūtradhāra* presents the audience with a synopsis. There lived a Brahmin merchant named *Cārudatta* in *Ujjain*. In his poverty, only his mistress *Vasantasenā* was attached to his virtues. A love affair between the Brahmin and her like the vernal splendour is dramatized by *ling* *Sudraka* who has depicted therein the ways of the world the wickedness of life and men and Fate. ²

The three plays of *Bhavabhūti* are also an illustration in this respect. In *U R* the story is well known and it is merely mentioned and the same holds true of the *prastavanā* in Act VII to the play within the play. In *MM* the whole story is narrated by *Kāmandakī* which role the *Sūtradhāra* himself has taken. The *Sūtradhāra* of *Bhavabhūti* is always more skilful in first assuming a rôle contemporary with the story. In certain cases where only parts of a well known story are dramatized the *Sūtradhāra* explains the context. Thus in *M. V. C.* the actor friend says to the *Sūtradhāra* *kṛta prasādaḥ paṇḍitaḥ kim tu apūrvatvat prabandhasya kathā pradeśam samamambhe srotum iochantu*. The audience is humoured but as the play is unusually constructed it wants to know at the very beginning the particular part of the story (of *Ramayana*). Similarly in the *V S* of *Bhatta Narāyaṇa* dealing with the well known epic story of the *Kauravas* and the *Pāṇavas* the *Sūtradhāra* gives an idea of what part of the epic story has been dramatized. With this can be compared the statement in the *U R* *atrabhāvataḥ Maharāja rāmasya ayam pātābhiseka samayah*. This is the coronation function of *Rāma* —whereby *Bhavabhūti* informs the audience that he has dramatized the *Rāmāyaṇa* story subsequent to *Rama's* coronation.

The above illustrations are mentioned only to point out the functions of the *Sūtradhāra*. In this respect, the Sanskrit *Sūtradhāra* evolved like the Prologues of *Euripides*. The Greek tragedian found Prologues necessary since his story or treatment was usually out-of-the-way sort. In Sanskrit Dramas the *Sūtradhāra* appeared even where the story was well known. This difference is due to the fact that the *Sūtradhāra* was there even before the Sanskrit Drama while the Prologues of *Euripides* came in as a device long after the Greek Drama.

There is another function of the Sutrādhara which must have been one of the earliest. After informing the audience of the play etc. he immediately but giving an intimation to the audience beforehand assumes a role in the play. We have already given instances of this nature. In the early days the sketches must have been such as were conveniently composed of a few characters: the art of make up i.e. the *nepathya* must have been unknown or unavailed of. So the Sutrādhara at one stroke of his word assumed the rôle required and in the new capacity introduced the other characters as well. That the Sutrādhara *did* introduce all the characters may be reasonably imagined on the analogy of the modern village shows where on the first entry of any character he asks the name, the purpose of the arrival and other details thereof.

Performing as he did these various functions the Sutrādhara was known as the Sthāpaka. As Bharata tells us³ the Sutrādhara is himself the Sthāpaka when he opens the play.

prayujya vidhinaivam tu purvarangam prayogatah
sthāpakah praviset tatra sūtrādhāra gunākṛtuh

After the initiatory stage worship should enter the Sthāpaka whose garb and functions are the same as those of the Sutrādhara.

As Viśwanātha the author of the S. D. explains later on the Sthāpaka was for all practical purposes known as the Sutrādhara. The scene in which the Sutrādhara entered as Sthāpaka was known as the sthāpana foundation ground work opening or Prologue. Thus we have sthāpanās in all the plays ascribed to Bhāsa. In most of them the Sutrādhara (he is not styled as Sthāpaka here) alone enters the stage to introduce the story and the situation and the characters to the audience.

As Dramatic Art progressed things must have developed. We have already seen how music and dance were gradually introduced into such representations. With the addition of these features the functions of the Sutrādhara had to be modified. He need no longer introduce the play in the dry formal manner or in an equally abrupt way (cf. the sthāpanas in Bhāsa's plays where the Sutrādhara is immediately made to listen to some words from behind the stage which he goes on to explain with reference to a context in the plot.)

The functions of the Sūtradhāra were not only modified but, as time went on they multiplied. The musicians—the Kuśilavas—were also brought on the stage. As there was no recitation now which they could set to music, the Kuśilavas helped the Sūtradhāra to open the play with music. Whatever the pretext under which music was played there was no doubt that the audience was more pleasantly lulled into a receptive mood. Besides supervising the overture, so to say the Sūtradhāra had when later on dancing was also introduced to face a woman who sang and danced but who after all had to be utilised for the purpose of introducing the play. That dancing came in the wake of music is evident from the fact that the word *natī* a danseuse is a Prākṛt form. That both music and dancing were simply introduced to make the opening less formal and more pleasant and to humour the audience into a sympathetic attitude that they had nothing to do with the play and that they had no place in the evolution of dramatic representation is recognised by Bharata himself. Dancing plays no part in a drama. It is introduced on the stage simply because it adds to the charm of the production. Everyone has a natural weakness for dancing. It amuses the audience.⁴ But it should not be overdone. 'If dancing and music are given in excess the audience as well as the actors are likely to be tired of it.'⁵ Thus a new responsibility was thrown on the shoulders of the Sūtradhāra. Not only should music and dancing be not overdone but he had to see in the name of his ability as manager and producer that in spite of their charm they were not entirely unconnected with the show. The very circumstances under which a play was produced in those days gave the Sūtradhāra a chance to fit in music and dance. Plays in the early days it should be remembered were performed in the open. What would be more seemly than singing a hymn in praise of the surroundings or more poetically in praise of the season itself? The only favourable seasons for a performance in the open are the Spring and the Autumn. So in almost all the Sanskrit plays we find the *natī* singing in praise of these two seasons.

The character of *Natī* is interesting from one point of view. What was her position in the play or in the troupe of actors? In the early days we can well believe her to be a songstress and a

4 N S IV 260-263

5 N S V 161

danseuse and such we find her in most of the plays. She was in no better advantage except in her natural charm and grace than the Kuṣilavas who were also musicians. And yet the advent of naṭi marked the rarity if not the total disappearance of the Kuṣilavas in the dramatic world. Such is the conquest of charm and grace and delicacy in the world of Art'. It is always the shrewd keen-eyed Eve that is attracted by the Forbidden Fruit and then tempts the clumsy Adam on to it. Whether it was the Sutrādhāra or the audience that was tempted first the fact is clear that as time went on the Sutrādhāra and the naṭi are thrown more and more together. In some later plays like the *Mirch* the *Rat* or the *M. R.* the naṭi is represented as the wife of the Sutrādhāra. She is not addressed as *ārye* (oh ' noble lady) merely but as my dear and all that by the Sutrādhāra. Was she the wife of the Sutrādhāra or the wife of the *Sthapaka*? In the first case we have to imagine a *hereditary professional caste of naṭis* in the second merely a *professional class*. A close perusal of Sanskrit plays would tempt one to believe that there gradually arose a hereditary professional caste of actors. In the prologue to the *Rat* the Sutrādhāra tells his wife (*grhīṇī*) that his younger brother has dressed himself up in the rôle of *Yaugandharayana* (*nanu ayam mama yavīyān bhrātā grhīta yaugandharāyana bhūmikaḥ prāpta eva*). By the time of *Harsa* (607 AD—640 AD) we can believe in the existence of such a caste. Leaving aside the momentary inconvenience of some settled views in chronology we might take it as a fairly general rule that plays where the naṭi is represented as the wife of the Sutrādhāra are later in age. The *M. R.* for example gives interesting details of the relations between these two characters. The Sutrādhāra addresses his wife in these words

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gunatātī upāyanālaye sthītī heto sadhike trivargasya
madbhavana nūtī vidye kūrṇād ārye drutam apāhi

Diligent and resourceful you are the guide of my life virtuous as you are you are my helpmate to the Higher Truths you are my domestic deity presiding over the art of management etc

To resume the narration. The naṭi thus became a permanent member of the Sutrādhāra band. With the aid of the Kuṣilavas and the naṭi the Sutrādhāra could entertain the audience and at the same time inform them of the play, the plot, the characters and

so on His work now was not mere *sthāpanā* or introduction but introduction with amusement or to use the technical words of Sanskrit dramaturgy the *sthāpanā* was now called a *prastāvanā* The *prastāvanā* was originally nothing else but the music the singing in praise (the Skt. root *stu* —means to praise) of the seasonal charm It was the music essentially that made the difference between the *sthāpanā* and the *prastāvanā* It is only in some later plays like the M R or the V S that we read of a *prastāvanā* with no music on the stage Music and not necessarily the *naṭī* is the distinctive feature of the *prastāvana* and hence even the Kusalavas turned a *sthāpana* into a *prastāvanā* It would be unnecessary to stress the point too much since the Prologue was soon enough standardised

Lastly one more feature must be pointed out which is persistent in and characteristic of all Prologues It is a commonplace that in any ballad singing attention is first attracted and then retained by establishing personal relations with the audience This tendency must have existed in the earlier plays more so since those performances were given in the open No ruse would serve the purpose better than flattering the audience to the skies Even in modern folk songs this feature is not to be missed Similarly the *Sūta* and the other bards and ballad singers in the early days praised their audience The *Sutrādihāra* of Sanskrit plays does the same He addresses his audience as noble sirs (*āryamītra*) learned (*vidvāt*) appreciative (*guna grāhin*) and so on This feature of taking the audience into the dramatist's confidence and of establishing a personal relationship between the actors and the audience is to be found in early literature of other countries as well We can compare the tone of Kālidāsa's Prologue to his A. Śāk (where he says that he would not deem his performance a success unless the learned audience is pleased (*ā pantoṣād vidoṣām na sādhu manye prayogavijñānam*) with for example the chorus in Aristophanes' *Frogs*

Fear not for a want of sense
Or judgment in your audience
That defect has been removed
They're prodigiously improved
Thus their own ingenious natures
Aided and improved by learning

Will provide you with spectators
Shrewd attentive and discerning⁶

We might as well mention before we conclude one difference in this respect between the Sanskrit and the early Greek plays. Personal relationship is maintained in both but, while in Sanskrit plays the *Sūtradhāra* or the *prastāvanā* alone is utilised for this purpose in Greek besides the *chorus* even the characters within the play address the audience. Thus again in *Frogs*

Bacchus —Do you see the villains and the perjurers that he told us of?

Xanthias —Yes plain enough don't you?

Bacchus —Ah now I see them indeed quite plain and now too
(Turning to the audience)⁷

Has it not been mentioned that the Greek drama was more democratic than the Sanskrit? At the very start they part ways

6 Plays by Aristophanes (Dent's edition) pp 60-61

7 *Ibid* p 16

CHAPTER IX

PLOT DEVELOPMENT IN SANSKRIT PLAYS

(The *Viṣkambhaka* and the *Pravesaka*)

The play was introduced first of all to the audience. In that connection we saw that the *Sūtradhāra* was responsible mainly for the introduction to and partly for the personal touch with the audience. It should not, however, be supposed that the responsibility of the *Sūtradhāra* ended then and there. As the stage manager he was responsible for the whole show. In this chapter we shall see if the *Sūtradhāra* had any other functions besides introducing the play and its general management.

Drama, as suggested in connection with its origin, was a representation of selections. Whenever a story is represented it should not be supposed and it will never be found possible either to represent each and every incident in all its details. The central theme might be a heroic deed or a noble truth; some relevant points are represented so that the central theme is set in brighter relief. Besides, from the early days drama had had the advantage of being a complete unit by itself. Thus the story in any play proceeded along broader lines while the minor and relevant details were summarised in their proper places for the convenience of the audience. This is what is meant by plot development here.

How then was a representational story developed in the earlier days? In the very beginning we can believe the *Sūta* or the *Sūtradhāra* shouldering responsibility in this respect for any representation. If it were the dialogues from the epics the *Sūta* would recite in company with his musicians; passages that were not in dialogue form either the *Sūta* recited alone or summarised. We could say all this if there were any evidence to warrant the existence of such a representational form in the earlier days. There is however no definite evidence for such a hypothesis. If at all we are to judge by comparisons we must go back to some other country or civilization. In connection with Religion and Drama it was shown how dangerous it would be to judge by comparisons. Nevertheless we can not pass over a circumstance that obtains in some of the earlier

Greek plays. In establishing a personal relation with the audience it was seen how closely functionally and favourably the Sūtradhāra compared with the Greek chorus. The chorus had not this only function. We can see that the chorus was also capable of fulfilling a very useful function. It served to punctuate the stages of the action (as the drop curtain now serves to divide scene from scene but with the disadvantage of arresting¹ it entirely). It gave a convenient interval during which important events might be supposed to happen off the stage and above all it gave the poet an opportunity of commenting and moralizing upon the progress of the events in the play proper.² Thus it was the chorus which kept the audience once the play commenced in touch with the continuity of the action.

How was it done in the earlier Sanskrit dramatic representations? Could we suppose that like the Greek chorus the Sanskrit Sūtradhāra too played an important part in the plot development?

A glance at some of these Sanskrit plays would reveal that from a known period this kind of plot development was carried out in a peculiar way. There was nothing like a chorus or any character or characters equivalent to it to keep the audience in touch with the events off the stage. On the other hand some characters in the play itself were utilised for the purpose further the type of characters used in this way seem to have been fixed—since the traditional authorities on dramaturgy not only recognised that fact but turned it into a kind of a technicality to be strictly observed by dramatists. Two varieties of such a technique are recognised—one known as Viśambhaka and the other as Praveśaka. Three authorities (N S D R and S D) define them in practically identical phrases. In the D R these two are defined as

(1) Vṛtta vartisyamāṇāṁ kathamāṇāṁ nidarākah

samkṣepārthas tu viśambho rādhyapātra prayojitah (I 59)

A Viśambhaka is that which summarises through characters of an intermediate status past and future incidents and

(ii) tadvad-evaṇadattoktya nūca patra prayojitah

praveśonāa-dvayasyāntah seṣarthasyopasūcakah (I 60)

A praveśaka is similar only the characters are of a lower status and the praveśa itself appears in between two acts. The

1 C. E. Robinson *The Genus of the Greek Drama* Intro p 16

viṣkambhaka in A Śak—one in Act III and the other in Act IV. The story of the play, as mentioned so often, was sufficiently popular. Kālidāsa however, does not seem to have written the play for the interest and estimate it had with the populace. His interest was not merely to represent dramatically the traditional story. In Act III there is a viṣkambhaka which is very short and thus very easy to analyse. In this viṣkambhaka the whole of Act III has been brilliantly and artistically introduced. Duṣyanta's love for Śakuntalā has been sufficiently revealed so far. Now the first thing that the audience knows from the viṣkambhaka is that Śakuntalā is not keeping well. But the words used are enough to suggest to the audience of those days what this un-wellness is (atapa langhanād bala vad asvasta śanrā Śakuntalā). The whole of Act III—Śakuntalā writing a love letter, Duṣyanta overhearing her when she reads it out to her friends etc.—is the pure invention of the dramatist. A dramatic situation is created to bring together the hero and the heroine when both of them are mad and blind with love. What would happen when they meet each other? What if this love's intrigue would lead in this stage of madness to something beyond the limits of reason or decency? All may be fair in love but it would not be fair to talk of all that afterwards. But Kālidāsa gives no chance for the audience to feel unnecessarily virtuous, not even out of neighbourly considerations. In the viṣkambhaka itself the Śiṣya informs the audience that after all the venerable Gautamī would come to see Śakuntalā. As a matter of fact Gautamī does come in just to prevent Duṣyanta from flouting stage etiquette. That the audience both demanded and understood such assurances could be reasonably believed since Kālidāsa himself describes it in his prologue as cultured (abhirūpa bhūyisthā paṇṣad iyam) at least, Kālidāsa wrote only for such an audience.

Likewise the viṣkambhaka in Act IV prepares the audience in a clever way for the new incident and the original interpretation of the dramatist. To start with Kālidāsa has invented a situation and that situation has been described at length viz. the part to be played by the ring, secondly that the whole episode should be interpreted as a tragedy in the highest sense is suggested throughout the viṣkambhaka. The disturbing calmness of the undisturbed morn, the uneasiness of the friends, Duṣyanta not sending any message, the lonely and forlorn figure of Śakuntalā seated at the door of the hut, the uncouth outburst of a choleric sage who has reasons to pronounce

an unkind curse—all this is suggestive of the atmosphere into which the play proceeds from now on. Lastly the curse of Durvāsas must have been significant to the audience. That curse is symbolic the tragedy is destined. The audience will sympathise with the heroine an innocent victim of the cruel and infallible Destiny (me vacanam anyathā bhavitum narhataḥ my words could never be taken back says Durvāsas)

The *viskambhaka* with such a significance for the development of the central theme may be compared with the *pravesakas* in these three plays. There are four *pravesakas* in all (A. Śak VI Malav III and V and Vik II). In all these there is nothing that affects the progress of the main events no incidents are mentioned that would be important in their bearing on the plot. In some places the *pravesaka* is there for no other purpose except introducing the following main scene. In others the *pravesaka* is nothing but a kind of a stage shift in favour and for the convenience of the audience or it merely emphasises certain points of the incidents already represented (cf Malav III)

It would appear from the foregoing as if some presumption is being logically worked out. The above examples have been discussed not because they bear out any presumption but that they reveal a genuine difference from the early days between the *viskambhaka* and the *pravesaka*. There might be as there are instances to the contrary. That in itself would prove nothing as the mere discussion so far would prove nothing by itself. There are many possibilities hence many considerations will have to be looked into. It is possible that soon enough circumstances that warranted the existence of such a difference between the *viskambhaka* and the *pravesaka* as explained above no longer existed or it is possible that the dramatist himself would be an artist superior enough to rise above the tradition or inferior enough not to utilise that tradition properly. As a matter of fact even after Kālidāsa some of the best Sanskrit plays do show this earlier difference between the *viskambhaka*—that serves the purpose of the stage convenience. The U R of Bhavabhūti is a good example. In all there are four *viskambhakas* in U R one each in Acts II III IV and VI. In all these four could be observed

- (i) the situations newly introduced by the dramatist.
- (ii) the earlier situations themselves newly arranged or re-ly interpreted and

where the plays were concerned with heroes and heroines of an extraordinarily high status, the second loses much of its significance when in between two acts *viṣkambhakas* are found as free and frequent as *pravesakas* while the last is doubtful for two reasons (a) In some of the best plays are found *viṣkambhakas* whose point is not at all so much to narrate incidents past and future (*vṛtta* and *vartisyamkāna*) In Act IX for example of *Bhavabhūti's* *MM* is a *suddha* i.e. unmixed *viṣkambhaka*. No relevant incidents past or future are summarised here. The following main scene is introduced in the first three or four sentences and the rest of the profuse *viṣkambhaka* is taken up by a description of nature (b) Secondly, the very interpretation of *śeṣārtha* as given above seems to be doubtful. Even as early as *Viśvanātha* of *S D* a confusion in this respect is noticeable. *Viśvanātha* who merely repeats the earlier rules has interpreted the phrase *śeṣārtha* in *D R* as *śeṣam viṣkambhake yathā* otherwise everything else as in the *viṣkambhaka* which means that he recognises only the first two differences. Even in *N S* which should be the earliest of the three this same superficial distinction is recognised (Cf *XA* 32-39). The *pravesaka* is a convenient summary of lengthy episodes (36) and the *viṣkambhaka* is similar (37). In the first the characters are of a lower status (33) while in the second they are of an intermediary status (37).

It should not be supposed that these treatises have entirely misunderstood the *viṣkambhaka* and the *pravesaka*. From one point the formulation of these rules was fortunate in that they prevented once for all bad writers from writing good plays even by accident. Their rules are based on observations. Those observations might have been incomplete or superficial with the result that the deductions therefrom are incomplete and superficial. The chief reason is love for mere forms and lack of historical or scientific outlook. That the *viṣkambhaka* and the *pravesaka* originated with purposes different as suggested by us seems more reasonable if an equally reasonable history of the early development could be traced. In the early stages the *Sutrādharma* recited or summarised the story at the very beginning. In some of the best plays the *viṣkambhaka* fulfils that function (cf *Malay I* and *M M I*). Thus it appears that at some stage the *viṣkambhaka* replaces *Sūtrādhāra* in one of the latter's traditional functions. All he had to do now at the commencement of the play was to introduce the poet and the play. The introduction of the

play was simple he would mention the name or the central theme of it. The introduction of the poet however must have been a complicated affair. Mere mention of the name would not carry weight or conviction. The poet had to be introduced not as an individual but as an artist. In other words the artistic methods and measures of the dramatist had to be introduced and explained if necessary. The Sūtradhāra as the manager of the show was more responsible. He could not leave the stage after the formal *prastavānā* we could imagine him waiting there to step out any and every time a new or clever artifice was employed by the dramatist. He would address the audience just before such a scene and explain the delicate situations that could not be understood merely by watching the course of events on the stage. Now and then he had to get up and summarise the incidents relevant to the story but not represented on the stage. Thus in the early days the Sūtradhāra himself must have been fulfilling the functions that later on are carried out by the *viskambhaka*s. And this evolution of the *viskambhaka* from one of the early functions of the Sūtradhāra might be responsible for the Sanskrit, and not the Prakṛt language being regularly found therein. We could believe such an early situation not merely on the strength of inference but on actual observations in the modern folk representations—representations of the populace which are ever more honest more enthusiastic and more conveniently situated to continue the tradition unbroken unaffected and unmodified. It is probable that as the art of dramatic representation developed with regularity the Sūtradhāra was distinguished in his two rôles (i) when he appeared at the very beginning, and (ii) when he appeared during the interval. In the plays and situations discussed so far the *viskambhaka* more or less precisely fulfils the second role with all its bearings.

In giving these examples we have not the least intention of conveying that plays in which the *viskambhaka* fulfils the supposed second function of the Sūtradhāra are earlier in age than those in which it does not. The only suggestion made is that such plays reveal a natural development of an earlier tendency. This circumstance might or might not be concerned with the relative priority of these plays. Śūdraka's *Mṛcch* for example has neither *viskambhaka*s nor *praveśakas*. Could it be reasonably said that the play therefore, is one of the earliest? This absence of interludes might be due to the fact that the incidents of the story are so well knit

together in one continuous whole. Could it be said on the other hand that this very latter feature shows that the play is one of the later if not the latest? In Viśākhadatta's MR there are two *praveśakas* in Act V and Act VI. The first differs from the second introducing as it does a new situation wherein the *mudrā* or the signet plays the part of involving the Rākṣasa into one of the worst complications. In Act VI the *praveśaka* simply summarises the events. In spite of this difference both are styled as *praveśakas*. Is it on a merely technical (superficial enough) ground viz that the characters belong to a lower status and speak in Prakṛt that the interlude to Act V is called a *praveśaka*—while it shows features of a genuine *viṣkambhaka*? Could we because of this scrupulous observance of technicality assign the play to a fairly later age? This however is not the time nor is it the place to attempt a definite answer to such questions.

One thing will have to be noted in this connection. With the exception of the plays of Bhavabhūti all other post Kālidāsa plays show a confusion between the genuine *viṣkambhaka* and a *praveśaka*. The plays of Śrī Harṣa (601-640 A.D.) are an illustration to the point. In Rat and Nag together there are two *viṣkambhakas* (Rat I Nag IV). In the first the story of the play is introduced with the appropriate background. In Nag Act IV the *viṣkambhaka* has no point whatever. Nothing related to the past events is mentioned the only practical use is to let the audience know that the following main scene is laid on the sea shore (*samudra-vela*). In other words the *viṣkambhaka* here serves the purpose that stage equipment or curtain would serve in the modern plays and the *praveśaka* would serve in the older plays. In this function the *viṣkambhaka* and the *praveśaka* have been indiscriminately mixed by Śrī Harṣa. (He has however recognised an apparent distinction according to the status of and the language spoken by the characters.) Thus the three *praveśakas* in Rat. II, III and IV and the *praveśaka* in Nāg. I serve the same purpose of introducing the main scene to follow. Beyond that they have no other function in the play. Probably Śrī Harṣa himself felt the pointlessness and monotony of such plays for in Nag he has initiated a new method of introducing the characters or the scene. As soon as the name of a character is mentioned in some connection in the dialogue that character enters on to the stage. In Act I for example the heroine says that if she stands there talking to unknown men some hermit (*tāpasa*) might detect her. No sooner is the word

tāpasa mentioned than that character enters. Similarly in Act II the heroine asks her friend if there is a remedy for her suffering. Her friend replies there is if he (i.e. the hero) were to come here and lo! the hero does come in before his name is mentioned. Again in the same Act the female friend says that Mitrāvasu (the heroine's brother) might be expected any moment and who should step in but the very Mitrāvasu referred to! The audience would in this way know the characters as well as the context. This only shows that the earlier *viṣkambhaka*s and *praveśaka*s had lost their original significance, had been confused and had deteriorated to a dull type where the dialogue was so standardised as to be conventionally monotonous.

A last instance might be given to show the unpopularity and consequent decay of the *viṣkambhaka* and the *praveśaka*. In Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa's V S there is one *viṣkambhaka* (Act II) and one *praveśaka* (Act III). Both fulfil the same superficial function of summarising the incidents during the interval and of introducing the main scene to follow. The dramatist when he created new situations or introduced incidents not represented on the stage had to resort to newer methods. In Act IV the death of Karna's son is described though it is not so relevant to the central theme as to justify that lengthy description. In Act VI a new situation has been invented by the dramatist. But the way in which the *Cārvaṇa Rākṣasa* is introduced and made to carry on the mischief is not only tedious in itself but is also responsible for the subsequent stupid and meaningless developments in that Act.

The earliest *Sūtradhāra* who proudly and pompously introduced new situations was thus at last reduced through the *viṣkambhaka*, to a superfluous character (or circumstance) that served as a machine talking in monotonous accents.

CHAPTER X

THE VIDŪṢAKA

The discussion in the last chapter has carried us to a far later stage in the development of Sanskrit Drama. In connection with the *prastāvanā* the various elements and characters related thereto have been described so far. There is however one more character which whether it is earlier or later appears in the *prastāvanā* of some Sanskrit plays and which is mentioned in books on dramaturgy¹ along with and as part of the definition of a *prastavana*. That character is the *Vidūṣaka* or the Brahmin court fool. Is the *Vidūṣaka* in any way connected with the origin of Sanskrit Drama? What light does that character throw on the development of Sanskrit Drama? Such and similar questions will have to be answered before an accurate and a complete picture of the Sanskrit Dramatic literature could be formed.

To start with it would be better to meet the *Vidusaka* in the plays themselves rather than in other places as books on dramaturgy etc. The character of the *Vidūṣaka* seems to be one of the earliest. He could be met with even in the earliest known group of Sanskrit plays viz. in that ascribed to Bhāsa. The *S V*, the *Aṅg* and the *Car*—the three plays wherein the *Vidusaka* appears—can in another respect be distinguished from the remaining ten of that group (with the probable exception of the *P Y*) the subject matter of these three is concerned with the life story of the traditional and mortal heroes of royal races. It has been already suggested that from the very beginning plays in Sanskrit dealt with the life story of either kings or gods. It should be now noted in addition that the *Vidūṣaka* is found only in the luxurious company of princes. Wherever the hero is a mortal king historical or traditional (history and tradition were not distinguished in those days) the *Vidūṣaka* appears on the stage. Is it a mere coincidence? Or was that character connected in any way to the nature of the hero and of the plot? When with the lapse of time mythology too merged into tradition even mythological heroes like king Vikrama in the *Vik* of Kālidāsa were provided with a

Vidūṣaka That the Vidūṣaka is a personal and an intimate friend of the hero king is obvious even to a casual reader of Sanskrit plays that the Vidūṣaka is a court fool is also made evident by some of the Sanskrit plays and that the Vidūṣaka is a confirmed Brahmin fool with physical as well as mental perversions is a tradition accepted by all the later Sanskrit dramatists

How did such a character appear at all on the Sanskrit stage? How was it that a Brahmin was represented in such a ludicrous light, especially during these early days when a Brahmin was highly respected through love and fear and habit?

It has been referred to above that, by authorities on dramaturgy the Vidūṣaka is mentioned in connection with the *prastāvanā*. The S D has these words

naṭi vidūṣako vā pi paṇḍarāvaka eva vā
sūtradhārena sahitaḥ saṁlāpam yatra kurvate
āmukham tat tu vijñeyam nāmnā prastāvanāpi sā

The *prastāvanā* or the opening is that where the naṭi or the actor friend or the Vidūṣaka appears in a dialogue with the Sūtra dhara

The *prastāvanā* as well as the Sūtradhāra have been shown to be the earliest features in the development of Sanskrit Drama. Can the Vidūṣaka also mentioned in that connection, be an equally earlier feature? Or can it be said that the S D being one of the latest treatises (the D R too belongs to the 9th or 10th century A D) has entirely misunderstood the significance and has been misled by the superficial features of the character of the Vidūṣaka?

(1) It is true that the Vidūṣaka is the closest friend of the hero (who except in the Cār and the Mrchh.) is invariably a king. In Bhāsa's S V a play belonging to the earliest group of known dramas, the Vidūṣaka is represented as having some of those traits which were later standardised. He refers to hunger and eatables. He is said to be a talkative person which opinion is quite justified throughout the play. But Vasantaka, as he is called here is not such a perverted fool as he is made to appear in some later plays. Nay on the contrary he is not only a sincere friend but a close observer of human nature and quite a resourceful helpmate. There is moreover one function which is fulfilled by the Vidūṣaka, a function that

2 Also cf. Rat. I., A. Śāk. II. Mālav. III. Mrchh. VI. etc.

could not be fulfilled by any other character, and hence which could be said to be the purpose and the peculiarity of his. He is the only character, who helps to introduce the hero who serves as a foil to the latter and who is the only medium between the hero and the other characters on the one hand and between the hero and the audience on the other. One might even go to the length of saying that in all such plays the hero is introduced in all his relevant personality by the Vidūṣaka and the Vidūṣaka alone. He introduces not only the character but the scene and the situation as well. The audience is amused and instructed when the Vidūṣaka describes in homely and humorous phrases the scene laid. In most of the Sanskrit plays whether earlier or later, the Vidūṣaka is utilised to give the description of the particular scene surroundings and time. Thus in S V IV Vasantaka describes the sights of the garden.³ *The Vidūṣaka always speaks in the Prakṛt dialect* let us remember

(11) The Vidūṣaka appears to be a man of wide experience and keen observation. He is made responsible for some of the best sayings. It is a speciality with him to summarise in pithy phrases, social experience and outlook. Strangely enough in his early days he is one of those shrewd men who know what to say and when and where. Thus in the Mṛcch III he protests that he is not such a fool as not to know when and where to joke (yathā nāma aham mūrkhah tat kim parihāsaṣya api deśakālam na jānāmi). When a right thing is done in a right way the Vidūṣaka is not slow to appreciate it. In the S V he compliments the King on his proposed visit to Padmāvatī as that lady is suffering from headache. 'Behaviour begets behaviour' is his word of wisdom (Satkāro hi nāma satkarena pratiṣṭah prītim utpādayati). Similarly in his usual homely allusions could be seen his keen power of observation. That the Vidūṣaka was keen and clever is borne out by some of the later classical plays which retain this trait of his. Thus however different the three Vidūṣakas in the three plays of Kālidāsa might be all of them are men of experience and observation and could give utterance to simple and sensible truisms.⁴ The fact that the Vidūṣaka is a Brahmin partly explains and is partly explained by this feature. A Brahmin was then generally respected as the repository of knowledge and experience and a Brahmin was the only one qualified to teach and

3 Also cf. Rat. I A Śāk. II Mālav III Mṛcch VI etc.

4 For a further analysis of Kālidāsa's Vidūṣaka see Chapter XIII.

criticise. In a Brahmin Vidūṣaka therefore any statement would both be understandable and justifiable. Instances might be multiplied to show how the Vidūṣaka *and the Vidūṣaka alone* is made the mouth piece of common sense truths. The following would give an idea of Kālidāsa's Vidūṣaka

- (i) lotrena gṛhṭasya kumbhīlakasya asti vā pratīvacanam—
What could a thief caught red handed say ? (Vik II)
- (ii) prāvṛṇnādi iva a prasannā gatā devī—The Queen is as disturbing (i.e. enraged) as a river in rainy season (Vik II)
- (iii) chinna hasto matsye palāyite nirvīno dhīvaro bhanati dharmaṃ me bhaviṣyati iti—The dejected fisherman when the fish escapes him might say he has done a meritorious deed in not killing it (Vik III)
- (iv) alam atra gṛhmayā aparādhu śasaniyah—Show no mercy. An offender must be punished (Vik V)
- (v) kadāpi satpuruṣāḥ śoka vaktavyā na bhavanti nanu pravate pi niṣkampā girayah—Good (or great) men never give way to sorrow. Mountains do not tremble even in storms (A. Sāk VI)
- (vi) paṇḍita paritoṣa pratīyā nanu mūdhā jātiḥ—It is the fools that are always goaded by the approbation of the learned (Malav II)
- (vii) na khalu mātā pitarau bhartṛvyogadukkhītām duhitaram draṣṭum pārayataḥ—No parents could ever stand the miserable plight of their daughter separated from her husband (ibid)
- (viii) dandira ātura iva vaidjēna upanīyamānam auśadham icchasi—You are like a poor patient who longs for a doctor's medicine (Malav II)

(iii) The Vidūṣaka is not merely an experienced man but his experience is cast in a typically Hindu outlook. He is a confirmed fatalist. It is probable that he is usually called a Vaidheya — which means not so much a fool as a firm believer in Vidhī or fate. The half pathetic and the half-comic situations and sentiments of his reveal a man that Fortune's buffets and rewards hath taken with no thanks. How piteously he complains in the Mṛchh. that every-

thing goes wrong with him' (mama punar brāhmanasya sarvam eva viparītam parinamati) Neither in the S V nor in the A. Śāk. do we find the Vidūṣaka on the stage to witness the happy reunion of the hero and the heroine. It is quite characteristic of him to be the unwilling victim of both pain and pleasure. What wonder then if he were to believe that against the freaks of fate a human being is helpless? Who can challenge Fate? Everything is so and so i.e. as destined (anati kramanyo hi vidūḥ idṛśam idanīm etat) are his words of consolation to the king in the S V. Similarly in the A. Śāk. VI he consoles King Duṣyanta saying that Fate is ever powerful (bhavitavyatā khalu balavati). This feeling of helplessness and this fatalistic outlook of the Vidūṣaka could be instructively compared with the unrealistic ravings and bragging of the hero—as he is usually found to be doing in most plays.

(iv) The foregoing is sufficient to show that the Vidūṣaka is an experienced Brahmin of a fatalistic and resourceful nature. How or why is it that the Vidūṣaka is always supposed to be and in later Sanskrit plays is always represented as a fool? Why was a traditionally cultured Brahmin required to play a cultivated fool? How did a Brahmin come to be a Vidūṣaka and how did a Vidūṣaka turn into a perverted fool? These are the questions to be considered before a correct understanding of that character could be had.

Why was a Brahmin in the first place introduced as the Vidūṣaka? The answer to this question has been already suggested above. The character of the hero was invariably too exalted from the point of view of social status and besides the hero as he is represented in almost all the Sanskrit plays is His Amorousness first and His Highness or Majesty next. In all these plays moreover it is the private life and leanings of the hero that are to be represented. Would such a royal hero condescend to talk of his love affairs to the ordinary characters introduced on the stage? Could the ministers and the menials and the maid servants be deemed qualified to talk openly with or about the hero in his love affairs? True the heroine is the fittest person in this respect. But she is too shy and too noble to talk freely with or about the hero. Moreover she is the end and not the means of the development of the love story. Who but a Brahmin, then could be more suitable to carry out this responsibility? By birth he belongs to the highest caste by his caste he has distinctive

privileges and immunities. This sense of immunity helps to bring out the characters and the situation in bolder relief. The Brahmin Vidūṣaka would be a friend of a status sufficiently high for the king and would also justify the confidence placed in him. Thus in the earliest plays we would imagine the character of a Brahmin introduced. This character must have served the purpose of painting the hero in contrast to as well as in some life like aspects. This is the reason why the Vidūṣaka, in all Sanskrit plays speaks in a Prākṛt dialect. He interprets the cultured and the cultivated sentiments of the hero to the populace.

For the functions he had to perform, it was not necessary that the Vidūṣaka should be either learned or pedantic. Oftentimes as in the Avī II of Bhaṣa he is called an *avaidika* (i.e. a heterodox fellow) he quotes the epic Rāmāyana as a *nāṭyasāstra* (a book on dramaturgy) and he compares himself to an uncultured prostitute (*prākṛta garukā*). The various names of his in the different plays are in themselves evidence to show that he made no claims to traditional or cultural learning. Such names as Vasantaka Mādhavya Mānavaka Maitreya etc. have no association with the prominent names in the history of Brahmanic culture and learning. In the plays too the responsibilities of the Vidūṣaka were not directed either at holy purposes and functions or at any communication with the higher worlds. What was needed of him was more of common sense and paradoxical as it might seem the Vidūṣaka had a fund of common sense. Moreover for the chief and lively purpose of helping his hero-friend in his love affairs the Vidūṣaka had to be a man loving intrigue and scandal. As a Brahmin he had an inborn capacity for intrigue and scandal. As a member of the highest caste he could poke his nose into any affair and he could talk with an irresponsible laxity. It was this capacity for intrigue and scandal that probably earned for him the name *Vidusaka* meaning a scandal monger (lit. one who spoils or disfigures). Thus in Mālav I the king speaks of his friend Vidūṣaka as a *kāryāntara saciva* i.e. a counsellor in a different sort of affairs. Similarly in the same play the younger queen refers to the Vidusaka as *Kāmatārtra saciva* i.e. a counsellor in love-affairs (IV).

We can now see as to how or why the Vidūṣaka deteriorated into a classical fool. The nature of the responsibilities he had to carry out brought him into closer and closer contact with the female

world high and low in the play From the plays of Bhasa to those of Śrī Harṣa the Vidūṣaka moves in the world of the harem and the maid servants It is in these circumstances and not when he is with the king that the Vidūṣaka plays the fool He had to be amusing if he had to achieve his purpose. Being a clever man he knows his jokes with the maids and the menials as well as with the hero and the heroine It is the increasing association of the Vidūṣaka with the menials of the harem that is responsible for conveniently turning him into a fool Stupidity is the price paid by the Vidūṣaka to gain access into the world of the heroine and her associates One must be a deserving hero or a harmless fool to seek the company and the confidence of the beauties of the harem

There is yet another feature that might explain why the Vidūṣaka had to be a fool It has long been the tendency of dramatists to represent their hero as a successful adventurer against innumerable odds To be a hero one has not only to meet but plunge into dangers nay the greater the number of dangers the nobler hero one would be Naturally all sorts of dangers and complications were placed in a hero's path Some playwrights after Bhāsa utilised the Vidūṣaka in creating such complications In adding to the complications the Vidūṣaka was only carrying out his original responsibility of showing the hero in noblest colours The complications created by him an unfortunate pessimist and fatalist as he was could be expected to be unfortunate ill placed and hence comic It was only a question of time that a Vidūṣaka who created such unfortunate situations should be called a fool Thus in the Vik II he commits the folly of letting out the secret of King Vikrama's love for Urvāṣī In the Mālav IV he talks aloud in his sleep and lets a similar secret out In Rat of course he is made to commit series of systematic and stereotyped follies It is however only in some of the later plays like those of King Harṣa that the Vidūṣaka is the *traditional perfect fool* Once he became that he ceased to be of any significance in a play If the Vidūṣaka is to be a perfect fool from the very beginning how could he serve as a medium between the hero and the audience or between the hero and the heroine? How could he be expected to raise laughter by his semi cynical generalisations and his fresh and ill placed sallies? How could he interpret the finer sentiments in popular language? He could do none of these Humiliated worn out and superfluous he became a sort of a laughing stock for the audience with his nose crooked his limbs

deformed and his jokes stale. He lost his position and possibilities, his power and his freshness. Even before the play began we could know what he was going to say. He had grown too old to say anything new.

* * *

To complete the story of the Vidūṣaka reference will have to be made to his successors. The original Vidūṣaka died out. The purpose however, for which he was originally required in a play remained. This want was filled by some later dramatists of power and originality by creating other characters. It is however, to the credit of the Vidūṣaka that no single character could replace him. Nowhere else could be found that combination of the smiles and the sorrows of the fun and the freaks of life. In the *MML* of Bhavabhūti the character of Kāmandakī is akin to the earlier Vidūṣaka. Like him she brings the different traits of the hero and the heroine to the notice of the audience she introduces comic situations and she is a respectable lady of keen observation and wide experience. There was however no time for experimenting any further. Sanskrit, as a language had died out long before Bhavabhūti. Soon after Sanskrit ceased to be even a fashion.

* * *

The Vidūṣaka could thus be said to have been introduced in Sanskrit Drama from the early days. The very nature of the plot and of the hero required that he the Vidūṣaka should be a Brahmin busybody moving in aristocratic circles where scandal and intrigue are usually rife. With the gradual change in life and manners he was first stereotyped and then taken to pieces where all the active elements were reduced to dull technicalities. In the evolution of Sanskrit Drama itself the character of the Vidūṣaka had a place and a function. By the side of the hero the Vidūṣaka is both the Sutra dhāra and the Naṭi. He introduces the story and amuses the audience. Like the viṣkambhaka and the praveśaka he serves the purpose of informing the audience of the incidents mainly connected with the hero and supposed to have happened during the interval⁵. In this respect, he recalls to our mind the chorus of the Greek plays. The Vidūṣaka has stronger affinities to the chorus than has the

prastāvanā or the Sūtradhāra. He is the only character who offers the dramatists a most convenient, powerful and happy chance to moralize. So did the Greek chorus. Above all it (the chorus) gave the poet an opportunity of commenting and moralizing upon the progress of the events in the play proper. It should be added that the Vidūṣaka alone in the dramatic world could boast of commenting and moralizing on the progress of the events not only, in the play proper but in life itself on the whole. Not merely does he instruct us from a height but he does interest and amuse us from our very midst.

CHAPTER XI

EARLY PLAYS

(Bhāsa)

In the foregoing chapters we have described with relevant details some of the earliest features viz the Sūtradhāra the prastavānā the Vidyūṣaka etc in the development of Sanskrit Drama We shall now turn to the study of some of the earliest plays themselves The task here is more difficult Chronology is the one stumbling block in the course of the history of Sanskrit literature It is unfortunate indeed that a literature that can boast of great thinkers like the authors of the Upaniṣads of great story tellers like the authors of the two epics and of inspired poets like Kālidāsa—should leave in its trail no information at all as to the time and life of these accomplished writers In spite of the honest and laborious research work of the Western as well as of the Eastern scholars we are still groping in the dark region of probabilities The meagreness of the material data too has been responsible to an extent for the mischief of fanciful imagination or of prejudiced dogmatism

Nor is this all Though we know nothing for example of the personal history of Kālidāsa we are fortunate enough to know that he is the undisputed author of the great play—the Abhijñāna Śhūktalām though we cannot say definitely when and where Pārṣni lived we know this much for certain that there is no one else to challenge his authorship of the first systematic grammar of the world These writers are fortunate indeed when compared to certain others who are sometimes denied even the credit of authorship

One of such latter is the dramatist Bhāsa That there was a dramatist named Bhāsa is undoubted That he was a great dramatist is equally undoubted on the evidence of Kālidāsa's Mālav mentioned already From Bāṇa (7th century A D) and Rāja-ekhara (11th Century A D) we know that Bhāsa was a well recognised dramatist But it was only quite recently that Mahāmahopādhyāya T Ganapati Sastrī published in the Trivendrum Sanskrit Series some thirteen plays which he ascribed to Bhāsa These plays should give us an idea of the early Sanskrit stage provided they are the works of Bhāsa referred to by Kālidāsa and others Unfortunately Bhāsa's

authorship is not unchallenged. At present, there are three views on this question

- (1) the one that insists that all the plays are the works of Bhāsa
- (2) the second that insists as vigorously that none of the thirteen plays could be ascribed to Bhāsa and
- (3) the third that insists on not insisting either way i.e. which believes in a careful and compromising study

The Editor of the T S S. was an ardent advocate of the first view. In his introduction he has shown certain peculiar features as common to all the thirteen plays and has based his conclusion on these. The features referred to are as follows —

- (a) All the plays open with the same stage direction—*nāndyante tatah pravṛṣati sūtradhārah* after the benedictory verse enter the Sūtradhāra
- (b) The prologue in all the thirteen plays is called *Sthāpanā* and not *Prastāvana*
- (c) Usually in all the later classical Sanskrit plays the dramatist mentions in the prologue his name fame etc. (cf. the plays of Kālidāsa Bhavabhūti Viśakhadatta Śūdraka Bhaṭṭa Narayana etc.) But all these thirteen plays agree in the fact that there is in the Prologues no mention at all of the author etc.
- (d) The *bharata śloka* ends everywhere with the prayer 'May the mighty King rule over the whole earth' (*irām api mahim kṛtsnām rājasūnah praśastu nah*)
- (e) A structural similarity obtains in some of the plays e.g. in the opening verse the names of the characters are interwoven a figure of speech technically called the *mudrācankāṣa*
- (f) There are deviations from the rules of Bharata and Pāṇini

It is not within the scope of the present work to discuss the above points and their implications. One thing is certain viz. the style of all these plays shows that they are essentially meant to be represented on the stage. The *nandī* verse (see point (a) above) belongs more to the actors than to the author. It is part of the stage worship by the actors. The opening verse of a play is the author's and hence it cannot be said to be a *nāṛcī*. In the case of

the opening verse, therefore, the definition of a *nandī* does not apply says Viśwanātha. So we find (in a play like the Vik.) that some older manuscripts read the first verse after the stage direction *nāndyante* i.e. after the *nandī*.¹ It is only an illustration to show that the six features which the Mahāmahopādhyāya finds peculiar are either insignificant or not to be found in each and every play, nor are they usually to be found all in one and the same play.

On the other hand there are some obvious grounds to believe that the authorship of these plays belongs to more than one person. In the first place the S V the P Y the P R. and the Prat. are the only plays that show all the six peculiar features described above. Secondly these four plays can be distinguished from the remaining nine on the ground of the preponderating number of śloka verses in the former.² Thirdly may be mentioned the fact viz. that characterisation in these two groups is of such a different nature as to warrant different authorship. The Prat. and the Abhī. for example are both based on the Rāmāyana story and yet there is a significant difference in the two plays with reference to Rāma's character. In the Prat. Rāma is great because he is an ideal son, an ideal brother and an ideal husband. All his actions and thoughts are such as are within the sphere of mortal activity. In the Abhī. on the other hand Rāma is God incarnate. In a number of places he is mentioned as such. In Act I Sugriva addresses Rāma as *deva* —'God' (I-8) Rāma is Śrīdhara he is the Lord Madhusūdana himself irrespective of anachronism (*prabhur vā madhusūdanah* I 32) he is the Lord of the Universe (*bhuvanaikanātha* III 21) Lord of men (*nrdeva* III 27) Lord (*deva* IV 13 14) Puruṣottama (VI 27 28) and finally he is completely identified with Viṣṇu (*viṣṇur bhavān*, VI 30 31). Likewise a contrast could be observed between the P R. on the one hand and the M V the D V the D G the K B and U B on the other. (All these six are based on the Mahābhārata episode) Kṛṣṇa is a divinity *par excellence* in the last five plays. In the D V he is identified with Viṣṇu and

1 *evam ādeṣu nāndī lakṣaṇāyogāt. ata eva prāktana pustakeṣu nāndyante sūtradhārah ityanantaram eva vedānteṣu ityādi śloka lekhanam dṛśyate.* (S D p 28)

2 For a further analysis of these plays see the present writer's contributions to the Indian Antiquary Vol LX 1931 pp 41-45 and the Bulletin of the Sanskrit Literary Association Karnatak College Dharwar for the year 1930-31

the four divine weapons personified are introduced on the stage. In the D G Kṛṣṇa is Lord Nārāyaṇa. In the U B Duryodhana of all—he who had thousand and one grievances against Kṛṣṇa—declares in his dying breath that in being killed by Kṛṣṇa he was killed by

Harī the beloved (Lord) of the World (jagataḥ priyena harinā 35). The Bāṭ is full of miracles from the very beginning. Lastly may be mentioned an important technical difference between the two groups. The Prologue is called Sthāpanā in the four plays of the first group. Of the second group the K B has the words *itī pras tāvanā* instead of *itī sthāpanā*. The D G in the opening verse, uses the word *prastāvanā* in connection with a nāṭaka and the Sūtradhara. May the Lord who is the sūtradhāra that introduces and develops the eternal drama of the three worlds protect us.³ From such references would it be too much to infer that the two groups are not only not the works of one and the same author but that they belong to two entirely different times the first group being earlier and the second (wherein are to be found elements like the *prastāvanā* the dedication etc.) later? It was shown above how the Sūtradhāra was the earliest and the *prastāvanā* a later technical element in the development of Sanskrit Drama. In that case, we can reasonably believe that the four plays of the first group belong to a period much earlier than that of the remaining nine. Though among the thirteen plays we find some earlier and some later, we can reasonably believe that all the thirteen belong to the earliest period in the history of Sanskrit Drama. (Those attributed to Aśvaghoṣa might be earlier still but as they are not available except in fragments they do not much affect the present statement.) It is for this reason that we find among the thirteen plays certain deviations from the rules of both Pāṇini and Bharata. The N S is an elaborate treatise, which presumes a sufficiently developed stage. It would be unreasonable therefore to expect the earliest plays to accord with the rules of later treatises.⁴

There is another circumstance which speaks of the antiquity of the plays under consideration. It is the style and the treatment. In none of these plays do we find a highly artistic development. It is as in the case of the epics the story of narration that is more interesting than the art of narration. Nay the fact that most of the

3. *loka trayā virata nāṭaka vastu tantra
prastāvana pratisamapana sūtradhārah.*

plays treat of the epic episodes would tempt one to believe that these plays drew inspiration directly from the epics. The popularity of the employment of the epic metre strengthens still more such a belief. We have seen already how Sanskrit Drama owes its origin to the epic recitation. In the face of such circumstances would it not be reasonable to hold that these plays based so essentially as they are on the epic style and subject matter represent, almost certainly the earliest stage of Sanskrit Drama? Even those deviations from the rules of Pāṇini could then be reasonably understandable—since the plays must have been written in the popular style of the epics. It is interesting to note in this connection that in the K. B. one MS reads *katacankam samāptam* (thus ends the Armour Act) instead of *karna bharam avasitam* (thus ends the play *karna bhāra*). Similarly three out of the five MSS of the Abhū read *Śrī rama yanam samāptam* (thus ends the holy Rāmāyana) instead of *abhū ṣekanātakam samāptam* (thus ends the play *Abhūṣeka*). All these facts justify one to conclude that there must have been an attempt to dramatize the epic episodes. Similar attempts might have been made with the Rāmāyana though we have only the Prat and the Abhū (which be it noted cover between themselves the whole Rama story).⁴ Such a tendency is easily understandable. From the very beginning the epics had attained an unparalleled popularity. Even in modern India the recitation of the two epics is carried on with sanctimonious regularity. If we bear in mind that the form of narration in the epics especially in the Mbh is predominantly that of dialogues we should not be surprised at the attempts to dramatize the episodes therein. The task was not only tempting and inspiring but an easy one. The earliest dramas are thus merely the first attempts of the Sūta to popularise the epics by representing their themes on the stage. It is somewhat interesting to note that a legend speaks of Bhāsa as a dhāvaka i.e. a man of lower social status. Bhāsa might not have been an actual sūta of the epic traditions but he might have been of a sufficiently low origin and further sufficiently qualified to continue the sūta tradition of popularising the epics. Unless we take these plays as the earliest attempts in this direction we cannot satisfactorily explain defects in technique like

4 The story of Rāma is to be found even in the Mahābhārata (III). As a matter of fact the Abhū ending with the coronation of Rama, covers the entire story as narrated in the Mbh. The abandonment of Sitā etc. are not to be found in the Rama story of the Mbh.

disregard of time or place side by side with poetry of a high quality. Drama as such was still in its infancy. We find herein more of the epic style of narration than that of artistic arrangement. In plays like the M V the D G the U B the Bāl etc. there are fights on the stage which are half artistic. In the Bāl (III) we have a reference to dance (hallśakā) and music (ātodya). In the same play (V) there is boxing of Cānūra and Muṣṭika. In the U B (9) we read

cārīm gatim pracarati praharatyabhikṣnam
samsikṣite narapatir balavānstu bhūmah

The King (i.e. Duryodhana) is graceful in his steps and quicker on the weapon. he is a trained fighter. but Bhuma has more of physical strength.

The words *cārit* (a dance step) and *samsikṣita* (trained) show that dancing as an art had found a place in dramatic representation. Bharata is not so unreasonable when he says that the first performance was a *samavalāra* representing the fight of the Gods with the demons. The brilliant device of introducing dance on the stage as in Kālidāsa's *Mal* has here its crude beginnings.

CHAPTER XII

MAIN TENDENCIES

(A) *Social Conditions*

In the last chapter an attempt was made to show that the thirteen plays ascribed to Bhāsa belonged to the earliest period in the history of Sanskrit dramatic literature. Whether all thirteen are or are not written by Bhāsa is immaterial for the present purpose viz to find out the relation of these plays to contemporary social life. Since no one date is universally or with certainty accepted it is better to view the question from another point of view i.e. to find out the social conditions as reflected in the thirteen plays.

Could we presume in the first place, that a dramatist does necessarily represent contemporary social life and manners? Does he represent the world as it is or as he finds it or as he would like to find it? Though it is difficult to answer these questions it might be asserted in the present context that a good dramatist could not avoid depicting the tendencies if not the tangibilities of his times. It is more in the details and development than in the plot or presentation proper that one could reasonably detect the social and cultural background of the dramatist.

From such a point of view the society represented in these thirteen plays seems to be comparatively a primitive one. The conception of society as such as we have it now is still not to be found. It is the family the group of blood relationship that is recognised in a sort of social aspect. Family forming the one group of co-operation, is idealised. The sanctity and the claims and the traditions of the family come above all. Each and every member of the family owes allegiance to the family. It is his bounden duty to respect and preserve the family traditions. The thirteen plays under discussion are scrupulous and unanimous in this respect. In the *P R* for example, a family is said to be ruined even if an individual member misbehaves. A man with no character burns away his family (I 12). Members of a family will have to run away if one of them loses character (I 12). In the *Prat* when Rāma the legitimate heir to the throne is duly crowned his brother Śatrughna says: By this coronation of my elder brother the stain on our family is

wiped out (VII 13) Similarly in the Abhi Vali the monkey chief entreats from his death bed that his brother Sugriva should continue the good traditions of his family

vimucya roṣam paṅgrhya dharmam
kula pravālam paṅgrhyatām naḥ¹

Give up your anger and take up according to Dharma our family traditions

In the same play Sitā prays that her husband be victorious if she has never violated the high family traditions²

With this attitude towards the family it is no surprise if blood relationship is held in high sanctity. Members of a family are always believed to be identical not only in conduct and character but even in the details of their physical features. Instances even at random might be multiplied. Remarks like *aho stara sādṛśyam—aho rūpa sādṛśyam*—Oh 'what a resemblance of voice' of form and figure' etc are strewn over. Oftentimes they seem quite far fetched and ridiculous. Thus in the Prat (IV) Sitā goes forward to meet Bharata but the resemblance between the brothers Rāma and Bharata is so close that she mistakes the latter for her husband¹. In the MV the voice of Ghaṭotkaca misleads Bhīma who takes him for one of Arjuna's sons (since the children of two brothers would belong to the same generation) while Ghaṭotkaca is the son of Bhīma himself. Blood is so important that it could determine on its own strength even the character of an individual. For this reason the queen in the Avi is surprised that a heroic youth, who rescues her daughter, should be an *antyaaja*—a low caste fellow³.

Family was thus the recognised social unit. This fact is significant in another respect. It helped to determine the place of a woman in a society. A woman from her very birth, was a problem.

A father of a daughter to be married has enough to worry about says the king in the Avi (I). A woman too could destroy a family by her misconduct. A woman's faults cost the good name of a family. By the fault of a woman a good man, in a bad family

1 Abhi I 26

2 Bwarāḥ, ātmanah kula sādṛśena cāntrena yadi aham anuśarāmu ārya putram āryaputrasya vijayo bhavatu (Abhi V)

3 akulīnah katham evam sāmukrośo bhavet. How could a low born man be so sympathetic? Avi I

is destroyed (niviste duskule sādhuḥ strīḍo'neva dahyate. (P.R. I 14) A woman's capacity to destroy was greater than that of a man. In her life time a woman would be a member of two families—that of her parents in the beginning and that of her husband later. The King in the *Avi* says as much *kuḷadvayam hanti madena nārī*.

A woman by her bad behaviour destroys two families (I 3). As for the girl herself the time before marriage was happier than that afterwards. For this reason the female friend in the *S V* tells *Padmāvati* to enjoy before she is given away in marriage (*nirvartatām tāvad ayam kanyābhāvaramanīyah kālāh I*). Once married the girl became merely the property of her husband. In the *Prat.* *Lakṣmana* does not attempt to dissuade *Sītā* from following her husband to the forest. Why should he? A wife is her husband's property (*bhartr nāthā hi nāryah Prat. I 25*). In addition to this general privilege of being treated as a chattel a woman of aristocratic traditions enjoyed the right to live a sequestered or *pardah* (*avagunthana Prat. I*) life.

The married woman however was compensated in some ways for this loss of human rights. Within the four walls of a family she wielded authority and commanded high respect as a mother. Even *Chatotkaca* a being of *Rakṣasa* traditions speaks highly of a mother's position.

mātā hi manusyanāṁ daivatānam ca daivatam

A mother is a deity indeed to men as well as to gods. IV
37)

The chief characters in all these plays are more usually addressed under a maternal appellation. Thus *Rāma*, *Lakṣmana* and *Bharata* are addressed as *kausalyamatah* (one whose mother is *Kausalyā*) *sumitrā mātah* and *kaikeyī mātah* respectively. *Duryodhana* is *gāndhārī matah*. *Īkṣvāku* and *Vasudeva* address each other (*Bal*) as *saurasī matah* and *yadavī mātah* respectively. Where a married woman enjoyed such honourable position there was no place for some early and less refined practices like the *nryoga*—the levirate system. *Rama* in the *Abhi* accuses *Vali* of unlawfully living with his own younger brother's wife. Never should an elder brother live with his younger brother's wife (*na tveva hi kadacit jyeṣṭhasya yavīyaso darābhumarsanam—I*).

The only other social unit, bigger than the family and closely knit on the same ties as blood relationship and heredity was the

caste. The Brahmins and the Ksatriyas are referred to as the higher and the more important classes. The Brahmin however has an undecided superiority over all others. In the P.R. the universally respected Bhīṣma himself says that Drona is superior since you (i.e. Drona) are a Brahmin and I a Ksatriya. (*dvijo bhavān kṣatriya vamsajā vāyam* P.R. I 27). Even Karna in the K.B. says that he would never go against a Brahmin (*brahmana vacanam ita na mayā atikranta purvam*). Circumstances too are such as to justify a Brahmin's superiority. Sacrifices must have been still in vogue as it would appear from the enthusiasm and the elaborateness in which they are described at the opening of the P.R. People believed in the efficacy of the Vedic rites⁴. In every way the customs, conventions and superstitions in vogue speak of a well-established priest-craft. Oftentimes the very plot of a play is highly illustrative in this respect. The story in the S.V. and in the P.Y. is possible only because the minister Yangandharāyana believes in the fortune telling of a Siddha. Similarly Kaikeyī in the Prat. takes upon herself the unpleasant task of sending Rama and others into exile in order that a sage's curse may not be falsified. Her own words (VI) are definite - *apariharanyo maharṣasapāh putra vipravāsam vinā na bhavati*. The curse of a sage could not be averted nor was it possible (to minimise its dangerous results) except by sending the son into exile. In such a society of customs and conventions and ritualism a Brahmin was expected to be well versed in so many lore. Thus Ravana disguised as a Brahmin in the Prat. mentions the various lore he knows. Manus Code of Law, Māheswara Yoga, the Politics of Brhaspati, the Nyāya of Medhātithi and the Prācetasā rules in ritualism (*śrāddha kalpa*). Teaching centres too must have existed. In the S.V. I the śiṣya mentions Lāvānaka in the *Vatsa* country as a centre of education.

The life of the Ksatriyas on the other hand, seems to have been a hard one. From the S.V. and the Av. one could easily see that the country was divided into a number of petty principalities. A Ksatriya was brought up in a martial atmosphere. To fight was his one creed in life. It was either to die or kill on the battlefield but never to be defeated. Thus the old king Virāta in the P.R. says that

4. Cf. *hutam ca dattam ca tathaiva tiṣṭhati*. "Whatever is offered in a sacrifice or is given in charity lasts eternally i.e. brings eternal bliss" (K. B. 22).

he would acquire fame if he dies or in case he releases the cows from the enemies he would acquire merit. (nidhanam api yasaḥ syāt mokṣayitvā to dharmah—P.R. II 5) Similarly the boy Abhimanyu says that a hero must either die or conquer on the battlefield (avaśyam yudhu virajam vadho vā vijayo tha vā—P.R. III 5)

Political life under such circumstances cannot but be very unsettled. A Kṣatriya prospered according to his power. So as in the S.V. and the Āvi. we always find a king quarrelling with his neighbour. A Kṣatriya's career was in his weapons (bānādhunā kṣatriyā nām pravṛddhuh—P.R. I 24). Any adventurer could carve out a kingdom for himself. No wonder that Duryodhana ridicules the Pāṇḍavas when the latter negotiate for a share in the kingdom.

rajyam nāma nṛpātmajair sahydayair jtvā ripūm bhujyate
tal loka na tu vāc्यate na tu punar dānāya va dīvate

(D.V. 24)

Princes should conquer their enemies and then rule and enjoy a kingdom. Nobody ever begs for a kingdom nor does any one give it in charity.

Even after conquering it was not so easy to maintain it. Each and every prince was waiting to grab it at the earliest opportunity. So in the Prat. Rama advises his brother Bharata not to neglect the kingdom for a moment. (rajyam nāma muhurtam api na upেকṣam yat Prat. IV). Conspiracies might be hatched within the very walls of the palace. So even Sītā is slightly cynical when she hints that intrigues reign in palaces (babu vṛttāntāni rajakulāni rama Prat. I). Justice, popularity, leniency etc. are more in the diplomacy than in the doctrines of the day. It is difficult to see the motive of the old king Virāṭa when he feels ashamed to levy taxes without offering protection in return. (nirājyo mama ca karah karāni bhunkte, P.R. II 3). The virtuous protection is so ill placed. The freedom of style and the frequency of situations in which fights are usually described in these plays the way in which Vāli is killed on the stage (Abh. I) or that in which Kamsa dashes presumably on the stage a baby against a rock (Bal. I)—all this shows the roughness of the path that led to the throne.

The unsettled political conditions are further reflected in the bias against town life. The plays rarely let go a chance of showing disgust towards the turbidity and the turbulence of town life. When people are being pushed away even in the forest with the roughness

of policemen Yaugandharāyana exclaims—upavanam gramīkaroti ājñaya. Authority (i.e. the use of it) is turning the forest precincts into a town (SV I 3). Similarly the sight of dust and din is immediately associated with a town. (vanam idam nagarīkaroti—this forest is changing into a city Part. VII-4)

In such a society it is a satisfaction to find that art has advocacy and appreciation. Dancing is very frequently mentioned and introduced in the *Bal*. Even when a fight is going on the spectators do not fail to notice the graceful steps of the fighters. Thus in the *Abhi* VI 14 the Vidyadhara notices the fighters stepping a *cārī* (*cārībhir etān parivartamānan*). Music too held a high place. Queen Vasavadatta in the *SV* is said to play on the *vinā*. In the *Av* too the hero is a connoisseur of music (Act II). In the prologue to the *Prat*, the *nāṭi* is called on the stage for no other purpose than singing. Painting was another art which had worked up its place to the royal courts. Thus in the *DV* Duryodhana is looking at the picture wherein the episode of Draupadī being dragged by hair is sketched. The words in which he describes the picture are sufficiently technical to show that painting was appreciated and cultivated as an art. *aho asya varṇādhyatā aho asya bhāvāpannatā aho yuktalekhatā*. What a proper placing in the colour. How fittingly does it convey the feelings! Oh how proportionate are the lines and the perspective! Lastly drama and staging are mentioned in connection with extraordinary or festive occasions. Thus at the time of Rāma's coronation, in *Prat* I the maids are making arrangements in the music hall (*saṅgīta sālā*). The actors (called *nāṭakīyas*) have been asked to represent a play. What is still more interesting the actors have been instructed to select such a play as would suit the occasion (*kālasamvādinā nāṭakena*). Would it be too much to believe that play acting had reached a stage where it could meet the demands not only of the audience but of the occasion?

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(B) *Tendencies of the Early Drama*

The history of social life sketched so far should, if it were known to us in some first hand authoritative form have been the background of our study. As it is, the intriguing situation arises of first reconstructing such a history from such a literary material and then studying those very literary models in the light of the history thus reconstructed. As Carlyle says. In any measure to understand

the poetry to estimate its worth and historical meaning we ask, as a quite fundamental inquiry what that situation was? Thus the History of a Nation's Poetry is the essence of its History political economic scientific, religious.⁵ Thus with no desire to offer any further justification it would be noted as the only method of an honest study.

In what relation do the thirteen plays under question, stand to the society depicted above? How far do they represent the contemporary social tendencies? What place do they occupy in the history and development of drama as an art? These are some of the questions to be answered here. That the drama was recognised as a cultured entertainment for the rich and the poor alike is evident from Prat. I referred to above. Singing and dancing had already been incorporated in the acted play. There is only one thing which strikes even a casual reader of these plays. All the plays are prominent in betraying their inspiration mainly from tradition. The story of King Vatsa (the SV and the P I) on one hand and those from the epics on the other go to prove that the avowed object of the dramatist is to sing the glories of the highest god and of the highest man of Vedic traditions. The cult of sacrifice is upheld and applauded (P R I). The gods of the heroic age—Rama and Kṛṣṇa—are the subjects of devotion and description in the Prat. the Abhi and the Bal. The very godliness of the gods is that handed down by the epics. Of the two Kṛṣṇa is a greater favourite since he is identified more frequently than Rāma with the highest God. It is Kṛṣṇa again to whom the divine miracles are attributed (Bal).

That the epics influenced these early plays to an essential extent is obvious not only from the stories but from the style in which they are depicted. Narration and description as in the epics still form the foremost feature. Features that distinguish drama from literary are in general not prominent yet. Construction and characterisation are still in a nascent stage. Some scenes here and there have in them the making of dramatic art. e.g. (1) in the SV the King dreams about his first queen whom he believes to be dead but who as the audience knows is still alive though disguised and is actually present on the stage. (2) the way in which Bharata in the Prat comes to know of his father's death from the latter's carved figure in the House of the Dead or (3) the scene where Abhimanyu the

son of Arjuna is brought face to face in the PR with his father and uncles who are living incognito just then. Such scenes however are not only rare but are often introduced in crude abruptness and developed with no delicacy. Thus in the Prat though the scene is dramatic its very possibility is out of question. The time required to fetch Prince Bharata from the house of his maternal uncle is ridiculously short but, in that short while, not only is King Dasa-ratha dead but his figure carved and placed in the House of the Dead (to top that Bharata is aware of such a place for the first time¹). It seems as if the roughness of the social life is reflected in the crudity of the plays. They are typical of the age in which they are written. They are vile they are forceful they move with speed and determination but they lack that harmony and delicacy which alone could sustain the virility by making it attractive.

The social conditions seem to some extent to have checked the development of the art in one respect. The authors of all these plays are not only dramatists but teachers in morality. The lessons taught are of course elementary. It is that universal yet primitive sentiment which another great dramatist of another time was to express with due protests

O thoughts of men accurst

Past and to come seems best - things present worst²

This fatalist outlook an outlook more likely than any other to prove fatal to art is to be discerned in all these plays. It is all the sadness and the wickedness of the world that are held before us as the curse of this life and the cause of the life destined to come. God has been represented throughout more as a punisher of the wicked than as a protector of the good. Even the historical hero—King Vatsa—moves in a world of the evil inevitable. The youthful and heroic prince Avimāraka is labouring under the curse of a sage as he steps on the stage. It is true that most of the plays end in a happy union or reunion of the hero with the heroine. That is only a superficial aspect and should not lead us blindly to believe that all these plays are comedies much less to generalise that tragedy in art is unknown to Sanskrit drama. Who could be deaf to the eloquent pleading of all these plays on behalf of man helplessly fighting against fate? The Vidyāsaka in SV (Act IV) is a true representative of the age and of the dramatist

1 King Henry IV ii Act i Sc. iii

when he sadly sings the tune *anatikramanīyo vidih idramudānam etat* Fate is difficult to be overpowered well tis so and so that even the greatest should and small suffer is a sentiment expressed with conviction and consistency. This sentiment is the very element of tragedy in drama. It is only the fervent faith of Hinduism that saves the hero from being placed as the Shakespearean tragic hero is in such circumstances that his fall is assured. The tragic element however is to be seen in the fact that the hero is placed high above all the characters before he is made to suffer. And here does the dramatist, assume the role of a teacher in morality. The wicked of course pay with life for their wickedness while good character in itself is no guarantee to any exemption from occasional or inevitable lapses.

The five one act plays based on the episodes of the Mahābhārata lend support for admitting such a conception of tragedy. D.V. D.G. and U.B. are plays where Duryodhana is the central figure. He is not however the mean minded self-centred sinful demon that he is in post-epic tradition. He is a true representative of the dramatist's age arrogant, adventurous consistently unscrupulous and brutally reasonable. Inevitable doom darkens round such a character as night that hovers slowly phantom like and fear inspiring round the timid and sinful hearts. The most noble Karna (in K.B.) is made a victim of his own nobility and all because he was chivalrous and sincere in siding with the wrong. This tragic element as said above was saved fateful conclusions because of faith on the one hand and of ignorance on the other. The Hindu mind defied history by persisting in its belief of a happier life and a happier world to come. Present life and the earthly globe were presumed at the very beginning not to bring in any happiness. No hopes no despairs no desires no achievements. The character of the Vidusaka is symbolic of this attitude. He is a man destined to eternal disillusionment—where happiness is concerned. The hero and the heroine may be united but he himself is never destined even to be present on such occasions (cf S.V. A. Śāk. Vik. etc.) In thus creating a symbol for its age and its expression the drama of Bhāsa's days could be said to have made the first advance towards art. The social surroundings were not as yet such as could ensure it a happy rapid and healthy growth. Drama now was not so much a representation of man's life in the world as of man's position in the world. The dramatist desired not to construct the facts of life but to convey a sense of the forces in life.

CHAPTER XIII

KĀLIDĀSA

So far we have seen that the early Sanskrit plays (i) were more or less inspired by and thus based on the epics (ii) were narrative in form and development (iii) were staged in the open as the absence of stage-directions indicates and for the very audience to which the Sūta in earlier days recited the epics and (iv) that the authors of these plays were first moralists and then artists if at all. When we come to the next known period to be studied in this chapter, we notice a great change with respect to all these above four points.

If one were to speak on the evidence of plays available one would say that from the first century B.C. or A.D. there was a complete blank. Is it possible that during these 300 years or so no dramatist was born or that Sanskrit drama was not at all encouraged? It is true that as history tells us the cultured ascendancy during this period belonged not to the Aryan society in the north but to the Andhras, etc. i.e. to the adventurers of the non Aryan community in the south. In spite of these circumstances however it seems that Sanskrit literature *was* encouraged only patronage now passed into the hands of the foreigners like the Scythians established in the west and of non Aryan royal families like the Andhras etc. in the south. As has been suggested¹ already these foreigners as the inscriptional evidence shows extended whole hearted patronage to Sanskrit literature and the Vedic traditions.

The evidence of the literary materials too leads to the same conclusion. The plays next available immediately after those studied so far are those of Kālidāsa. In the prologue to one of his plays he refers to earlier dramatists of whom only Bhāsa is known to us.² Secondly the very excellence of Kālidāsa's plays presupposes many more earlier dramatists. Lastly we have evidence in Kālidāsa (as will be seen below) which shows that drama had been developing and had actually developed by his time to such an extent as to deteriorate into a fixed lifeless form. It was the genius of this great

1 Vide infra Chap VIII

2 prathita yasaśāṁ Bhāsa saumilla kaṁputrādīnāṁ prabandhān atukramya etc. (Malav Prologue)

dramatist that not only saved drama from degradation but raised it to an artistic source of joy—even at the risk of temporary (or contemporary unpopularity) ³

Kalidāsa is the reputed author of three Sanskrit plays—the Vikramorvaśiyam the Mālavikāgnimitram and the Abhijñāna Sa hūntalam. The first and the last deal with stories from traditional mythology (purāṇa) and traditional history (itihāsa). The hero of the second mentioned play is King Agnimitra—the son of Puṣyamitra who in the early part of the second century B.C. founded the Sunga dynasty ⁴. Thus it appears that even in Kalidāsa the same tendency as in the early days is to be found in singing of the glorious past. That, however would be a hasty judgment. Kālidāsa, as could be seen from his plays is first and foremost a student of art. In all his three plays singing dancing painting etc. are introduced in words and circumstances that reveal Kālidāsa as an expert connoisseur and critic. What is more to the point is his views on drama. To him drama is not, as to the early writers a popular method of preaching; drama he says is the study and not the moral of life. It is the varied scope of such a study that makes drama interesting to the various tastes of the public. Music, dance painting etc. do not attract each and all while drama combining in itself all these and dealings with the ways of the world claims a greater audience than does any other art. Here he says is to be found the manifold ways of the world arising from the three qualities (i.e. the variety of tastes and talents) and hence though varied in form and scope drama is an entertainment common to people of different tastes ⁵.

Under these circumstances one would be justified in expecting that Kālidāsa would work off the beaten track. Is such an expectation fulfilled in his three plays? It seems on the whole, that Kālidāsa eventually effected a revolution in the world of letters. Though from the point of view of their plots the three plays seem to belong to the antiquated standardised type dealing with love stories of traditional kings one could see that the development and the construc-

3 It is not the object of the present work to discuss the age of Kālidāsa. The sort of internal evidence elaborated in this chapter would strengthen the view that assign Kālidāsa to the period of Samudra Gupta or his son Chandra Gupta II (373 A.D. to 415 A.D.)

4 Cf. C. H. I. Vol. I p. 518

5 traigunyodbhavam atra loka-cantam nānārasam dr̥yat. nāṭyam bhānarucē janasya bahudhāpeṣam samārādhnam (Mālav. I-4)

tion therein point to an entirely opposite conclusion. Nay it seems that Kālidāsa deliberately selected the most popularly known stories so that he could divert all his skill towards their artistic construction. The audience already knew the story and imperceptibly and with no harm or disadvantage to the audience he left out the old narrative style.

It would be strange indeed if Kālidāsa achieved all this at one stroke or in his very first play. In the three plays we notice a gradual progressive adjustment of his art and conception and we also notice the painful struggle of an original mind with that Universal Ego—the dull and deadening conservatism. The partiality of Kālidāsa to music and dancing is consistently pronounced. In his very first play he assigned a great part to music and dancing. The only novel path he struck first was in that respect but otherwise his first play viz. the *Vikramorvasiyam* is nearer to the standard type. The *Malavikāgnimitram* is a further improvement on the *Vik*. For this reason we are inclined to hold against the more or less unanimous verdict of well respected and authoritative scholars that the *Vik* and not the *Malav* is the first of Kālidāsa's plays. The poet in the *Vik* is evidently younger than in the *Mālav*. The very manner in which he craves the indulgence of his audience speaks of a diffident voice. Of course, he says it is my play but that is not at all the important point about it. You should listen to it out of sympathy for the lovers or out of respect for the noble characters therein. I beg of you to follow attentively this work of Kālidāsa. * The *prastāvanā* or the prologue is modelled on earlier types as in the plays of Bhāsa. As soon as the *Sūtradhāra* introduces the play there is a cry for help behind the curtain and the *Sūtradhāra* then speaks in the same words as his predecessor in Bhāsa did. What is this I hear? A cry for help. Did I not hear it immediately I requested my audience to—Oh, I know. † The poet's construction of the plot is less skilful and his similes are more commonplace than elsewhere. The author here is more an enthusiastic young poet than a craftsman of art and ideas. The characters in the *Vik* (e.g. the *Vidūṣaka*) are standardised as in earlier plays. Kālidāsa was not only a new arrival him

6 *pranayīṣṭu vā dakṣiṇyāt athavā sadvāstu puruṣa bahumanat śruta manobhir avahitaiḥ kṛyām imām kālidāsaḥ* (*Vik* I 12)

7 *aye kṛiṇi nu khalu mad vijñāpanānantaram kuraṇā miva ākāśe sabdaiḥ śṛyate bhavatu jñātam* (*Vik* Prologue)

self but the first one of his time, in the field of drama. He says in the prologue that upto that time only plays of earlier dramatists were produced, that his was the first of a modern so to say. Why should he say that? What harm is there, one would like to ask him if earlier plays alone were staged? No harm Kālidāsa would reply but not so much good either they are all old and dull so dull and so stereotyped but my play is something different something *quite unusual* (apūrva). The Sutrādharma in the Vik. says as much and all this in the prologue⁸.

There was another reason as to why Kālidāsa boasted of his play as unusual (apūrva) in spite of its plot development and characters being of the early standardised type. In his enthusiasm for music and dance Kālidāsa had boldly introduced a new feature which as he thought was also more dramatic on the stage. That new feature was the whole of Act IV where for the most part only one character—that of the hero-king Vikrama moved on the stage. The king was virtually mad. He had lost his beloved Urvāśī he would not rest till he found her out. This mood of the hero was most favourable to a variety of music and dance. Secondly to remove the possibility of the scene growing monotonous to the audience Kālidāsa introduced two ethereal nymphs who kept on singing and humming in Prakṛt melodies an allegory about an elephant king madly in search of his beloved⁹. The hero-king was so mad that he would stop anything that crossed his path to inquire of his Urvāśī. Thus he asks a cloud an elephant a bee and so on. Could we *imagine* that these various objects were somehow represented on the stage? In that case the king would disappear from the stage for some time (the nymphs during the while sang their allegory). Could we *further imagine* a representation like the following? The hero asked an elephant, got, of course no reply and so walked out of the stage in the meanwhile a bee was shown on the stage the king re-entered to find the bee whom he asked as before, got no reply and so walked away as before and so on. With such an im-

8 mānśa bahusās tu pūrveṣāṃ kavīnāṃ dr̥ṣṭāḥ prajyoga-bandhah |
so'ham adya vikramorvaśīyam nama a-pūrvam nāṭakam prajokṣye

9 Re the arguments that the Prakṛt melodies in Act IV are spurious see R. B. S. P. Pandit's edition. In maintaining that those passages are genuine we have not followed the arguments advanced against R. B. Pandit by P. of R. D. Karmarkar (in his edition of the Vik. and others)

pressive stage movement it is no wonder that Kālidāsa should be proud of his original (apūrva) device but, to his surprise and indignation he saw watching during his first production more the audience than the play as any young dramatist would that his device had not pleased the audience or at least that it did not strike them and like all other young dramatists he walked home shaking his head half in pity and half in anger¹⁰ for the audience which was too stupid to see his originality

Great writer as he was (to be) Kālidāsa was neither dismayed nor discouraged Day by day he was finding more and more of the dramatist in himself and from now on he was not going to be dictated to either by tradition or by public taste. He would rather care, if at all for the judgment of the discerning few since they could, if ever form an independent opinion about any thing and on its merits while the (so called) public taste had no deep roots in convictions but grew up like a mushroom anywhere and any time

All this Kālidāsa said in as many words in the prologue to his second play the Malav where the Sutrādhāra says rather contemptuously

aye viveka vīrāntam abhihitam paśya
 purānam ityeva na sādhu sarvaṃ
 na cāpi kavyam navam ityavadyam
 santah parīkṣyānyatarad bhajante
 mudhah para pratyayaneya buddhiḥ

Your talk has no reason in it anything is not good simply because it is old and any work is not bad simply because it is new The experts compare decide and choose while the ignorant follow the opinions of others¹¹

To say that only old plays are good or that no new play could be good is just to talk nonsense Secondly a play is not mere recitation or narration as most of the old plays are. A play is essentially a representation or as Pāṇḍita Kausika says in Malav I prayoga pradhānam hi nāṭya-sastraṃ a drama is essentially a performance With this theory of his Kālidāsa was prepared even to risk the disapproval of the learned Only fools cater to the good

10 It would have been all pity if he were to know that any explanation that his device (with the prākṛt melodies) is genuine is rejected by some modern scholars by saying that it is a strain on the imagination

11 Malav I 2

opinion of the learned says the wise Vidūṣaka¹². But luckily the discerning few were so pleased with the stage device (prayoga) in the Vik that they requested the stage manager (Sutrādhara) to produce Kālidāsa's *Malavikāgnimitram*¹³.

Thus does Kālidāsa boldly stand in his second play all for art as he sees it. He pities those good writers who compromise with public taste at the expense of their art. There is not art but commerce to earn a livelihood they sell their knowledge¹⁴.

So he sets out to treat his story in a new fashion. In itself the story of the Malav is the usual one of a King's love to a pretty girl mixed with the follies and intrigues of the Vidūṣaka and with jealousies within the harem. But the whole atmosphere the entire development are of an original type. Music, dance, painting and fire arts (Śilpa) on the one hand and the ingenuity of the Vidūṣaka on the other place this love story on a different plane. Kālidāsa insists that the love of his hero king is not of a coarse type. When the king saw Mālavikā's (the heroine's) portrait he was just attracted but when he saw her sing and dance he was simply conquered. Thus in II 14 says the hero

sarvantaḥpura vanita vyāpāram pratī nivr̥tta hrdayasya
sā vāma locanā me snehasyaṁkāṣyaṁbhūtā

My heart is turned from the ladies of the harem this pretty eyed one is my all and only attraction.

Secondly the whole credit for the development of the plot belongs to the Vidūṣaka. By starting a quarrel between her two teachers he made it possible for the heroine to be personally brought before the hero and then the play unfolds itself (Acts I and II). On the occasion of the *dohada* function of the Aśoka tree the Vidūṣaka caused (deliberately) the queen to stumble from the swing so that disabled as she (the queen) was the function had to be delegated to Mālavikā (III). When Mālavikā was imprisoned by the jealous queen the Vidūṣaka feigned snake-bite, acquired the queen's signet and thus seeking an entry brought the hero to the imprisoned heroine (IV). In all this the Vidūṣaka is not the supposed court fool his

12 Bhagavati paṇḍita paṇḍita pratyayā manu rucīḥ jātū
(Mālav II)

13 Cf. abhūto śmī vidvat paṇḍitā etc. (*Ibid* Prologue)

14 Yasyāgamah kevalajivikāva tām jnana paṇyam vanujam vadanti
(*Ibid* I 17)

plans too are brilliant in his own way. One might boldly assert that the play was written entirely for the sake of the Vidūṣaka's character.

Such an assumption is not fanciful or far fetched. Kālidasa it appears has a defined purpose in making the whole play revolve round the Vidūṣaka. In the *Mālav* the Vidūṣaka is not the standardised fool on the other hand as already mentioned¹⁵ Gautama as he is called here has a fund of common sense. Only a close student of human nature could successfully incite two sufficiently cultured men like the teachers to quarrel among themselves. Gautama does it. He has an independent eye for beauty as when on the entrance of *Malavikā* he says to the King

prekṣatam bhavān, na khalu asyāḥ pratichchādāt
parihryate madhūrata

The charm of the original is no less than that of the portrait'
(II)

His field of observation is wide and his application apt as could be seen in remarks like—

(i) daridra ātura iva vadyena upanyamānam auśadham
iccasī

You are like a poor patient who looks to a doctor's medicine (which he cannot afford) (II)

(ii) sā tapaṣvī naga rakṣitā iva nidhr na sukham samāsa
dayitavyā

That poor dear is not easy to win like treasure guarded over by a cobra (III)

(iii) abo kumbhulakāḥ kāmukāḥ ca pariharanyā candrikā

Oh! Thieves and lovers should avoid moonlight.' (IV)

His ready wittedness too is apparent as when in Act IV he relieves the tension of an awkward situation with an apt remark

sādhū re pingala vānara suṣṭhu paritrātas
tvayā sankatāt sapakṣah

Bravo Pingala my monkey thanks for saving your caste fellow from a difficulty

It is such a character with common sense that gives a realistic touch to the entire atmosphere of the play. In the company of this Vidūṣaka the hero could never sink into that melodramatic and

15 See above Chap V

monotonous type as usual. Like an innocent, smiling child he brings a smile to every sour or serious looking face around him. His realism is both infectious and provoking. The scene of the quarrelling teachers and that of the jealous queen Iravatī—are natural responses to the Vidūṣaka's realistic mentality. The Vidūṣaka in essence is the worldly type of man. Wherever he moves the ways of the world (*loka-canta*) move too. With the creation of one such character the genius of Kālidāsa has enlarged the scope of drama. A drama is no longer a romantic biography of fairy prince but a realistic representation of the ways of the world. The Vidūṣaka—a kind of Mr Everyman—has found a high place in literature. It is Mr Everyman and not an Avatar that belongs to the world. So to understand the world one must first study the average man, the rightful and the long established inhabitant of this globe.

The study of the average man is always the beginning but not always the end of the study of the world and its ways. The world is something more than what the average man makes or thinks it to be. It has a definite past, so it must be having a future. The average man is guided by the past, so he will be goaded by the future. Though he knows it not, man is a product of the unfathomable past and may be likewise a result in the fathomless future. Thus man is a conscious citizen of this globe but an unconscious citizen of the world that was and of the world to be. Whether he likes it or not, the student of the world has to face this conclusion. Kālidāsa was not brought up in vain in the Hindu traditions. His reasoning led him direct to such a conclusion. He was himself floating out of the yawning past and visualised himself helpless in the future. Was it his intellectual struggle, supremacy and solitariness that drove him to raise his hands to the Almighty to be saved from the world-to-be? His last words in his last play—the *Abhijñāna Śākuntalam* betray the helplessness of an honest intellect before its own brilliance. Let the King turn to his subjects' welfare, let the learned learn to grow wiser (i.e. let the innocent fools grow at least more innocent and more foolish) but, runs the supplication—

mamāpi ca kṣapayatu nīlalohitah

punarbhavam paṅgata-śaktir ātmabhūh

Let the Inner God, Nīlalohita, whose powers enmesh me, let him—let him save me from the world to be. ¹⁰

Thus the last play is an evidence of the higher studies and the higher powers of Kālidāsa. In its background and its general atmosphere in its plan and its development it is entirely different from the *Malav*. The *Malav* deals with a historical (known) while the *A. Śāk* deals with a mythical or rather a traditional (unknown) hero. In the former the palace walls contain within themselves the different ways of the world in the latter Earth and Heaven form the playground of human fate and possibilities. The atmosphere in the *A. Śāk* is mostly that of a hermitage that of the Earth (Acts I to IV) and that in the Heaven (Act VII). Let us not forget to remember that a hermitage in those days signified the close of a man's life. In both the *Mālav* and the *A. Śāk* the theme is *loka carita* but the *loka* (world), in the *Mālav* is so different from that in the *A. Śāk*. The first deals with *a man* the second with *man*. Duśyanta and Śakuntalā—the hero and the heroine Man and Woman—are taken through all the worlds from the world originated by love to the world where love is consummated. The worldly wise Vidūṣaka of the *Malav* would in the *A. Śāk* be a child groping for his way in this tremendous journey from the unknown to the unknown. And wisely has Kālidāsa the artist, left the Vidūṣaka an earlier artistic creation of his in the background. Not only does the Vidūṣaka in the *A. Śāk* not play an important part, but has been deliberately removed from the centre of the action. The Vidūṣaka never saw Śakuntalā (I) was not present at the love marriage (III) is removed from the scene of repudiation (V) and left behind at the time of the reunion (VII).

* * *

The story of Duśyanta and Śakuntalā as told from the epic days was *a love story* of a gallant prince and an innocent beauty but with Kālidāsa it is a story of *love*. Long before Kālidāsa had found out that love as depicted and understood in the love stories was not *love* the eternal instinctive, all powerful constructive and creative force that it is. It is better said Kālidāsa, that love be not consummated than that it should be cultivated. It is not that the hero and the heroine meet and then fall in love but that if each is capable of love they *must meet*—it is immaterial if they meet here or elsewhere. Thus says the hero-king in the *Malav* (III 15)

anāturotkanthitayoḥ prasidhyatā

samāgamenāpi ratir na mām praty

para-para prāpti nirā-ayor varam
 sanra nā-opi samānarāgayoh

I would not be pleased at the union, though successful of the two where one is longing and the other not where each loves the other with the same intensity it matters not even if they die in despair

So we find that in his last play Kālidāsa has depicted Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā in a different way. As the play opens, Duṣyanta enters chasing a stag and throughout the play Duṣyanta is more a king with manly habits but never the usual hero-king sickening yet surfeited with love. The opening speech of the Vidūṣaka in Act II emphasises Duṣyanta's love for hunting if we are to reject the Vidūṣaka's account as exaggerated the Army Commander comes in to correct us. Hunting he says is a virtue with King Duṣyanta who so to say is built of sterner stuff (II 3). That Duṣyanta is a dutiful and conscientious king is obvious.¹⁷ No hero-king of a love story has anywhere else been depicted in this light. Such a Duṣyanta one least expects to be involved in a love affair. Likewise, Śakuntalā is not like other heroines brought up in the traditions of luxury and amorousness. And lastly the hermitage is the last place for cupid's trade to flourish. And yet such a hero and such a heroine fall in love with each other amidst such surroundings! Here is Love. Love that is free and healthy. Love that is not only nursed nourished and consummated in a hermitage (the laps of Mother Nature so to say) but that is never allowed into the interior of towns with clumsy courts of corruption, or of palaces of petty mindedness i.e. never allowed into the interior of hum-drum life.¹⁸ This world of ours is destined not to love, so it does not live. Life is love, says Kālidāsa and love is eternal. Life too should then be eternal shouldn't it? But just like love, life on the terrestrial

17 Cf. V 4 5 Also—

vetravatī madvacanād amātyam āryaprasunam brūhi
 cīraprabodhanān na sambhāvitam asmābhir adya dharmāsanam
 adhyāsitum yat pratyavekṣitum paura-kāryam āryena tat
 patram āropya diyatam iti

"Vetravatī let the minister know that we have not sat in Council today as we left our bed quite late. So whatever affair, have been gone through by the Minister should be despatched to us in writing" (Act VI)

18. So in Act V Śakuntalā only passes through the town as if only to bring to our notice the conditions of the palace and city

globe is not consummated. Even a powerful (and super human) king like the mythical Vikrama suffers as long as he is on this mortal globe [Sukha pratyarthitā daivasya Oh! how fate banters human happiness! is his cry (Vik. V)] This however, is not a counsel of despair. Kālidāsa tells us that Vikrama is going to the Heavens to help Indra and there he will have his beloved Urvāṣī all the rest of his days. Similarly earthly love is held in intellectual mockery in the Malav against the background of the Vīḍusaka's petty intrigues. What wonder then if Kālidāsa should raise his hands in supplication and cry out

Let the Inner God Nīlaloḥita whose powers enmesh me let him—let him save me from the world to be

* * *

From the foregoing it will be seen that Kālidāsa stands apart from his predecessors as an artist. Art and life differ in that the former is the achievement of intellect and intuition while the latter runs mostly along instincts. Any operation says George Santayana which thus humanises and rationalises objects is called art.¹⁹ Drama with Kālidāsa fulfils that function consciously for the first time in Sanskrit literature. Drama is not the mere representation of life but the presentation of an outlook on life the presentation of life in the light of that outlook. The more we study Kālidāsa the more we find that drama as an art is entirely changing into his hands. It is not mere story telling as in the earlier plays it is not mere poetic outburst as we shall see in most of the later plays. It does not preach morality at a time when moralists were invading the fortresses of literature. Drama here is suggestive first and suggestive last. What does it suggest? (1) The beauty of Man (2) The beauty of Him whose handiwork man is. As for the first Kālidāsa had long before anticipated Hamlet's sentiments about man. He could also say What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a God! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals.²⁰ Like Hamlet too Kālidāsa saw man as this quintessence of dust. But unlike to Hamlet, man delights Kālidāsa. The reason.

19 The Life of Reason (Reason in Art) p 4

20 Hamlet Act II Sc. ii

for this is man's parentage and heritage. To both i.e. parentage and heritage man is an unconscious servant. Work against God work against Nature man could not. How far man is a creature of his surroundings Kālidāsa has exquisitely shown in Acts I and VII of the *A. Śāk.* In the last Act Duṣyanta enters the hermitage of sage Mārica in the heavenly world. Immediately his right arm throbs (VII 13) What is the use? he asks. But the surroundings remind him of an earlier and similar occasion when the same arm had throbbed (I 14) And the consequences? Better not think about them. No sooner he decides to remain indifferent than words are heard from behind the stage *mā khalu capalam kuru*—do not be rash. As soon as Duṣyanta heard them he might have started in terror. Were not similar words addressed to him (in Act I) by the hermits? He is immediately thrown back to the old days. Oh! how pleased were then the hermits with him! How they blessed him to be the father of a world-conqueror (I 12)! Alas! where is all that now? Duṣyanta who in Act I could come to quick decisions in utmost confidence (cf I 19) could not now be confident about things quite reasonable. Just as he is living his past wishing that the hermits' blessings were come true, imagining what a bright boy he would have had for a son—lo what is this? He is seeing a boy (*Sarvadamana*) before him! All the parental feelings fanned by memory Duṣyanta now showers on the boy that comes on the stage. Like one in dream he actually wishes the boy were his own. Is he a world conqueror? Look here is the boy's palm bearing all the marks of a world conqueror! Poor Duṣyanta! The more he was reminded of earlier scenes the more he felt like one who had burnt his fingers when the female ascetic (who accompanies the boy on the stage) kindles his hopes by observing a close resemblance between the boy and himself! Duṣyanta dare not come to a decision. If we remember the younger Duṣyanta in Act I who within a few moments after seeing *Śakuntalā* decides that she must be a girl worthy of a Kṣatriya since a cultured heart like his is drawn towards her we see how thoroughly Duṣyanta has now been shaken. Apart from that he could not escape the influence of earlier memories revived under

21 *asya balasya te pi samvādini śaktir ity viśmāpatāsmu*

I am surprised that the figure and features of this boy and yourself should resemble so

22 I 19

similar circumstances ²³ All this is not so much explained as suggested. The materials are the ways of the human world. They are embodied in the dramatist's observation. Some sort of an atmosphere is created set against which one or two incidents of every day life are made to appear as illustrations of human conduct and character. In the history of past Sanskrit drama, the craft of the Master has inspired only one or two dramatists while with the others his story repeated itself by standardising an earlier originality.

²³ This might be an explanation of the word *abhijnāna* or *praty-abhijnāna* in the title of the play. The word means recognition.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MRCCHAKAṬIKA OF ŚUDRAKA

We left Sanskrit Drama in the last chapter as a plant blossoming in congenial soil of contemporary social life. As a piece of literary art it fulfilled two functions (1) it *represented* as far as necessary contemporary life which served as a background and (2) it *presented* the dramatist's definite outlook on life. Kālidasa who was the first to introduce these features was like any other innovating genius a revolutionary. The peculiarity of a revolution is that the followers are more fanatical than the originators. As in politics so in literature. Thus in the post Kālidasa period one would expect plays that exploit the art of the Master. To such a set of plays belongs the *Mrcchakatika* (The Toy Cart) attributed to King Śūdraka.

In the first place it should be borne in mind that apart from the question whether Śūdraka wrote it or not the *Mrcchakatika* definitely belongs to the post Kālidasa period. It is not our present object to discuss the date of authors nor is such a discussion of any practical value to us. Śūdraka is a mythical character. The information about him given in the prologue to the play is too ridiculous to be utilised in a reasonable discussion. It is not the author's but the play's date that matters to us. (It is more likely for two or more persons to have one and the same name than for two or more plays to go by one and the same title.)

The story of the play would be referred to below. In the story is a sub-plot related to the incidents of a political revolution. Political revolutions however seem to have been such simple affairs in those days as to occur any and every day. It was as easy perhaps to occupy a throne in those days as it is for any bully in these days to occupy a seat in a third-class railway compartment. The upheaval would not affect the bystanders—unless as a piece of curiosity to those inclined idly enough.

A comparatively more important fact is that the play utilises more characters both male and female, belonging to the lower society. Consequently the dialects used (i.e. the prakṛts used) are various (such as śauraseni, avanti, prācya, māgadhi and the apabh-

ramsas śākārī caṇḍālī and dhakka) The greater part of the play is in the dialects Of the twenty four or twenty five male characters only five speak in Sanskrit Of these five Cāruḍatta is the hero of the play Āryaka is the hero of the revolution Śarvilaka, a Brahmin of high culture skilled in breaking men's houses and women's hearts a gambler named Dardūraḥ and the Court Examiner (adhikāranaka) This fact may or may not be useful in determining the date of the play Nevertheless it suggests one thing viz that the play was probably written at a time when not only the Prākṛt dialects but even the apabhraṃsas were freely used and the employment of the dialects as such was more frequent.

Similarly the very development and the subject matter of the play might throw some light on the time the play was written in Throughout the play the hard hand of the Fate is felt Even when everything was destined to end happily the hero is moved to compare the human beings tossed by fate to buckets of water tossed by a water wheel now up and now down. (eṣa kṛṇḍati kūpa yantra ghaṭikā nyaya pralāto vidhuh)¹ Buddhism is mentioned in the play in all its details and there is an actual conversion of a menial to Buddhism (By the way one might wonder whether in case the author were a Buddhist a character of a higher status would have been converted to Buddhism) On the whole those were days of unsettled conditions and an indifferent government Each of the observations in itself may not be of any help but the rough life represented in the play read along with the revolution and the Buddhist conversion (of a menial) would suggest a time immediately following the disruption of a central authority and a time when Buddhism was tolerated because it did not affect the established Hindu life The Samvāhaka whose life, for a long time is any thing but reputable turns at last into a Buddhist monk and in a fit of generosity that affects a dramatist of the happy end school the Samvāhaka is made the imperial head so to say of all the Buddhist vihāras Such a time we could not imagine immediately after the disruption of the Mauryan Empire since Buddhism then was a court fashion besides the Apabhraṃsa dialects were yet to

1 X 59 Also cf Act VI where the hero's son wants the gold cart used by a neighbourly boy and the heroine sighs on this bhagavan kṛtānta. puskara patra patita jalā bhinḍa sadāsah kṛṇḍati tvam parusa bhāgadheyah.

evolve. The next Empire built which tumbled down in its turn was the Gupta Empire. After its downfall in the middle of the fifth century A.D. Buddhism might have once again raised its head (as the frequent visits of the Chinese pilgrims indicate) till King Harṣa sealed its fate forever by linking it with politics in the middle of the 7th century A.D. Is it possible that the play was written somewhere between the fall of the Gupta Empire and the rise of King Harṣa? Could we for example read such a meaning in the fourth verse of Act VIII where the Vita describes the park as follows—

a-arana sarana pramoda bhūtaih
 vana tarubhuh kṛyamāna caru karma,
 hrdayam iva duratmānam a guptam
 navam iva rājyam anurjitopabhogyam.

Here the trees are doing a good deal by joyfully offering shelter to the homeless the park (however) is like the untutored (i.e. uncultured) heart of the wicked it is like a new kingdom the titleship (upabhogya) to which is not yet proved. In the above, we can understand a pun on the word a gupta and the meaning as It is like the heart of the wicked, it is like a kingdom where the Guptas are no more and the new kings have not established their authority. Further we may note that Aryaka who is successful in the revolution is called a gopala dāraka. Leaving the above questions unanswered for the time being let us come to another striking feature viz the influence of Kālidāsa throughout the play. Certain phrases and ideas are more obviously perceptible

(1) In Act I when the heroine is taking off her ornaments to hand them over to Śakara the Vita says na puṣpamoṣam arhati udyāna latā let not the garden creeper be deprived of its flowers. One is immediately reminded of Kālidāsa who in A Śak. I 15 compares a woodland lass to *tara lata* (a forest creeper and a town beauty to *udyana lata* a garden creeper).

(2) In Act I again the same Vita on learning that the heroine is in love with Cārudatta says *susthu khalu idam ucyate ratnam ratnena sangacchatu*. The context as well as the contents of the above remark remind one of Kālidāsa's words in a similar situation in Raghū VI 79 viz

2 Cf also Act VII *tatahpravisatu guptāryaka pravahanasthah*.

tvam atmanas tulyam amum vṛnīṣva
ratnam samāgacchatu kārīcanena

This person suits you well choose him let jewel be studded with gold The Vita in *Mrcch.* however quotes (ucyate it is said) let jewel be studded with jewel

(3) In Act IX Cārudatta protests that he did not murder Vasantasēna As a matter of fact he *could* not How could he? He would not injure even a plant by plucking its flowers (IX 28 yo ham latām kusumitām api puṣpahētor ākṛsya naiva kusumāvacāyam karomi) The fine sentiment expressed here takes one to an equally delicate situation in A. Śāk. where Śakuntalā is described by her father in similar words (IV-8 nādatte priya maṇḍanāpi bhavatām snēhēna yā pallavam she loves to adorn herself with flowers but she loves you—trees—more than that and so she doesn't pluck a single sprout)

Instances could be multiplied³ More important still is the influence on the technique and the handling of the *Mrcch.* The hero and the heroine and the atmosphere of the *Mrcch.* are worldly in the first place and the idea developed is the same as that of Kālidāsa The hero and the heroine of the latter are mythical (in A. Śāk.) while those of *Sūdraka* are matter of fact Love is Life is the text of Kālidāsa Love *in* Life is the text of *Sūdraka* Kālidāsa chose the unconventional (from the point of view of the subject) atmosphere of a hermitage *Sūdraka* chose the unconventional quarters of a courtesan Love in Kālidāsa is consummated in another world Love in *Sūdraka* is consummated in another atmosphere (viz. after the revolution) In both love is studied in so far as it affects character Action there is in *Sūdraka's* play but it does not happen on the stage The play is a character study It is like a mirror house where each one of the ten acts is a mirror wherein a person is seen from a particular view point The play is suggestive of the relations of man to and of his place in the society In doing this it follows in the foot steps of Kālidāsa

In order to see exactly the significance of the statement that *Sūdraka's* handling etc. is influenced by Kālidāsa we have to analyse minutely the structure of his (*Sūdraka's*) play The story was probably better known before the play Cārudatta a poor Brahmin falls in love with Vasantasēnā a courtesan of culture Śākara the brother

3 Cf. *Mrcch.* IX. 29 and *Vik.* IV. 13 The last line of the former is addressed to Śākara

in law of the ruling king has met with rebuffs at the hands of the courtesan so all his fury is now against Cārudatta. A mistake in taking a carriage leads Vasantasēnā into Śakāra's private gardens. The latter unable to win strikes her and thinking her to be dead runs away. Next we find him busy accusing Carudatta in a court of law of Vasantasēnā's murder. Nothing can save the hero who is now led to the gallows. In the meanwhile Āryaka who during his escape from the prison was protected by Cārudatta is now successful in the revolution and as his first act after coronation saves Cārudatta from the gallows. Vasantasēnā too had only fainted when Śakāra left her and now she runs into the untied arms of Carudatta.

The story above is the reader's construction and not what the dramatist tells directly. The situations introduced by the dramatist are suggestive in themselves. In creating the atmosphere, devices like the evening time in Act I or midnight in Act III or the clouds and the thunder and the lightning in Act V etc are improvements on Kālidasa. They also show a greater mastery over the technique. So the story is not told but suggested or we might say that the story is presented in a way that suggests what the dramatist feels and thinks about it. To depict the love between the hero and the heroine is not the purpose of Sudraka. That they love each other he tells us at the very beginning of Act I. There is something else that the dramatist wants to depict and for this he builds in Act I the outlines within which the possibilities of the development are to be described. The interest centres on Vasantasēnā the heroine. Keen and appreciative in observation graceful in movements sprightly in behaviour confident and courageous she personifies in herself the Joy in Life (the same as Śakuntalā in A. Śak. I). In theory accessible to all (as a courtesan) in fact inclined to the few deserving from the moment she is seen fleeing from the vulgar in life (Śakāra) to seek safety in sympathy amidst culture and sincerity (at Cārudatta) we admire her courage we appreciate her position and we identify ourselves with her fears and frolics. On one side is the poor but cultured and youthful Brāhman disgusted (with his poverty) and despairing (as any other youth would) on the other is the rich but uncultured Śakāra. While the Brāhman has tasted the miseries of life to grow wiser and more sympathetic Śakāra has tasted the pleasures of a high position only to grow self-centred and selfish. Both are outwardly encouraged and helped in their respective behaviour by their friends and servants. The Brahman earns love from

his friend Maitrēyaka while Sakāra buys service from his Vita. Between such extremes is Vasantasēna placed and it is no wonder if she comes to be the point of clash.

Act I suggests the possibilities of such a clash. Cārudatta is introduced in his characteristics as a well bred and well behaving householder. The time is right when the evil forces are supposed to be let loose. Like the darkness of the night comes Sakāra so swift and so dangerous. It is a welcome accident which gives a chance to Vasantasēna to observe the contrast between Śakāra roaming like a hell hound and Cārudatta quite a picture of decency. The hero also has a chance of seeing Vasantasēnā not the courtesan as she would be at home with coquettish smiles and cunning eyes. He sees those very eyes now seeking safety that very figure now hunted in ugly cruelty. The gallant youth and the admiring courtesan forgot for a moment their respective positions that one was a man with no means and the other a woman of no status. In their very helplessness these two social outlaws ran into each other's arms. Time was not yet. The Joy of Life knocked at the gates of Nobility but the latter had not the power to retain it. So Vasantasēnā is sent home.

If Act I shows the hero at home and the heroine outside, Act II shows the hero in the outer world and the heroine at home. Poor Vasantasēnā¹ in her filthy surroundings where vagabonds and drunkards and gamblers swear and brawl and drink¹. Filthier still is the atmosphere that her mother breathes into Vasantasēnā's room. It is a hard fight for the heroine. A woman of no status¹. Is it possible that a woman who is fighting against such surroundings has no status²? Her heart goes as if to escape out of the window where on the road Cārudatta has given away his only garment in appreciation of gallant work. A poor Brāhmin and a man of no means¹. Suddenly her fight is over. No longer is she a woman of no status nor is Cārudatta a man of no means. What is true is character. The hero in spite of poverty retains his character and the heroine in spite of surroundings establishes her character. They are now indispensable to each other since the heart of each throbs for the life of the other.

Act III shows the hero once again at home but now he has entirely changed. Love or the Joy of Life has vitalised his feelings. No longer does he sit at home cursing poverty but enjoys his capacity to enjoy. It is *Love* and not *love for Vasantasēnā* which makes him rise in his love of music above the humdrum and into the

harmony of Life. From that height we laugh at the worldly worries of the Vidūṣaka (Maitreyaka) we generally forgive the wicked ways of the world and of the thief and not until we meet the noble wife of Cārudatta do we descend to the earth. In the meanwhile the neglected world has played a trick by removing the symbol of the Joy of Life in the form of the gold ornaments deposited by Vasantasenā in Act I.

Act IV, shows us that this symbol *had* to disappear now. Its work was done. It came and conquered and then it took the tale of that conquest to its mistress. Paths of love seem to run in a circle. The thief loved the heroine's maid and so the stolen goods found their way back to the heroine. The fact that the hero attempted to replace the symbol only shows how perfect its conquest was. The man with no means is now the richest richest in character the woman with no status is now the noblest—in her appreciation of nobility and (Act V) in the midst of the mad world protesting flashing threatening and thundering the two are united.

To an average mind the story ends here. But the Mrochakatikā as said above is not a love story but a story of Love. This Love is all-creative. It creates itself before it creates all. Whatever it touches it vitalises and is ever vitalising. It builds a home it sets up a society and so in Act VI we meet Vasantasenā mothering her lover's little boy. That boy has a clay-cart which he does not like she helps him with her ornaments to get a golden cart. In a moment she herself is in the wrong cart—the cart she would never have liked. Śākara's cart is detained owing to congestion on the road outside Cārudatta's house. Vasantasenā gets into it mistaking it for her lover's cart and speeds headlong into the jaws of death. So does Cārudatta whose cart has been occupied by the run away rebel with a price on his head whom our hero forgives and helps to escape. Thus the hero and the heroine are in the grips of cruel fate. But that fate is here nothing but the little accidents caused by the irrepressible Joy of Life itself. Acts VI and VII tell us that the Joy of Life *has to wade* through the underworld of misery if it should illuminate the latter. So when Vasantasenā in Act VIII falls down struck by the mad jealousy of Śākara she does so not before she evokes the best traits in Viṭa and the Ceṭa. The stores-house of Joy and Grace is looted. says the Viṭa when he sees the lifeless body of Vasantasenā. Master the poor cartman chokes out, Master you have committed a grave sin! When Śākara confronts both of

them face him in a rebellious attitude. As for the heroine we need not be anxious. Her own good deeds come to save her in the form of the Samvāhaka whom she had earlier saved from the gamblers and who is now a Buddhist mendicant. In Act IX, Cārudatta is hauled up before the authorities charged with Vasantasēnā's murder. But the whole scene serves more the purpose of showing how the mere presence of the hero is enough to evoke the best not only in the Court examiner and the Assessors but even in that vile mother of Vasantasēnā. As to his own safety once again good deeds of the past revive to redeem. He is for the present condemned to death not because the Court examiner was convinced nor that the Assessors or the mother believed in his guilt but, ironically enough on the evidence of those very ornaments with which Vasantasēnā had filled his son's cart and which the Vidūṣaka during a scuffle scatters in the court. Whatever it is the clay-cart now fulfils its functions as a symbol of the miserable world uplifted by the touch of the joy of life. The rebel whose life was saved by Cārudatta has now succeeded and his first deed as a king is to set Cārudatta free. The joy in life has now rejuvenated the world and Vasantasēnā is reunited with Cārudatta. Without Cārudatta's help Āryaka would not have been a king and but for Vasantasēnā Cārudatta would have had no chance of saving Āryaka.

* * *

We have discussed the play at such length for two reasons (1) the *Mṛcchakatika* is the only (at least available) play of the dramatist and (2) the play shows the new departure introduced by Kālidāsa in broader lines. It was said in connexion with the *Malav* that Kālidāsa with the creation of the worldly Vidūṣaka brought drama nearer to life. This feature was emphasised in *A. Sak.* by the creation of the living characters and scenes with life. Śakuntalā as a sprightly girl laughing and enjoying in the company of her friends (I) as a love sick maiden (III) as a wife recognising her responsibilities (IV) as a mother fighting for her position (V) and as a woman prepared at all costs to share with man the pains and pleasures of life—this Śakuntalā lives in everyday life and thought. So does Duṣyanta a healthy young man with healthy tastes (I and II) a lover of beauty and innocence (III) a man knowing and shouldering his responsibilities (V and VI) and kind hearted father (VII). Likewise the family life, with all intimacies and intri-

cacies is realistically depicted in Act IV. The *Mṛcchakatika* too introduces life on the stage. The scene of the gamblers in the disreputable locality (II) that of the cartmen driving their carts on crowded roads (VI VII VIII) the one where the thief effects a break into the wall (IV) or where Sakara and his friends chase Vasantaśēna in a dark corner of the road (I) or where the two police-officers quarrel (VI)—all these are the scenes from the matter of fact world. With these two dramatists Sanskrit drama pulsates with the currents in social life. The art of Kālidāsa is fresh, that of Sūdraka is powerful. Both however are artists to the very tips of their fingers.

CHAPTER XV

THE DOCTRINAIRE DRAMA

(*Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata*)¹

A THE TEXT

From the early days to the *Mṛcchakatika* of Sūdraka we have traversed a long way and as we look back we find in astonishment how such a simple commonplace semi religious function like *Recitation* evolved ultimately into an artistic method of representation. The changes in the process must naturally enough have been so slow and so gradual as to be imperceptible for a long time. But a time does come in all such processes of evolution when an inquisitive mind takes the first chance of detecting and recording those changes. It need not be added that success alone stimulates and forms the subject matter of such a study. With Bhāsa Kālidāsa and Sūdraka drama grew in success and popularity. Naturally men turned to understand analytically if possible this new art which was recognised as art quite newly. Thus we find about the fifth or sixth century A.D. an attempt for the first time to systematise and codify the results of this study. It is not that drama was not studied earlier but those earlier studies could not be expected to be systematic for two reasons. (1) drama as such took time to develop into a distinctively recognised literary art and (2) no standard plays of an artistic type could be expected till later still to justify such a study. Kālidāsa and Sūdraka mainly contributed in removing both these difficulties and soon after we have the first treatise on dramaturgy the *Nāṭyaśāstra* known as that of Bharata.

At the very outset a grave objection might be raised. How could it be shown that Bharata's book belongs to the 5th or 6th century A.D. ? It has not been and it could not be shown. Besides the *Nāṭyaśāstra* attributed to Bharata and traditionally handed down in 36 chapters (containing about 5556 verses) may not be the work of Bharata. In that case the date of Bharata does not affect the date

1 The references can be found in the 1929 edition of *Nāṭyaśāstra* in the Kashi Sanskrit Series No. 60.

of the *Vāṭyasāstra*. Secondly, some original treatise on the art of recitation or on *rasa* as composed by a Bharata might have been amplified with reference to later developments. Or lastly original short studies on various topics concerned with recitation, representation, voice-cultivation, physical culture etc. might have been edited in an encyclopaedic form. Surmises like these are proposed not with the intention of going round a difficulty to avoid it but on the actual textual evidence. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* in its available form is bewildering by its construction and chaos. On first observation its construction seems so compact and so comprehensive, at the same time there is so much that seems senseless and superfluous—as the following analysis would show.

Chapter I is in the usual vein singing the glories of the book. It proves its divine origin and establishes the sanction of antiquity by declaring that *natya* is (1) the creation of God Brahmā and (2) the fifth Veda open to all castes. This fifth Veda was created from out of the four Vedas (Verse 17). Here said Brahmā to the gods: here have I produced an *itihāsa* (19). But the gods were unable to perform it, so sage Bharata was approached. Bharata had an enviable advantage in his hundred sons (26-39). However he found out that in the fifth Veda sons alone had not the monopoly, as in the other four Vedas, of taking their father to *śārga* and success and salvation. So he had to request Brahma to create Apsaras, damsels to play female roles. With these initial preparations a *nāṭī* and an *anukṛtī* [probably a (panto-) mimic show] of the fight between gods and demons were represented (59) on the festive occasion of Indra's victory (56 *Mahendra vijayotsave*). The demons naturally resented this public display of their defeat and raided the performance. A *nāṭyagrha* (playhouse) had thus to be created as a protective measure. In the meanwhile Brahmā pacifies the demons by singing a lyrical panegyric of *natya* (which is shown to have too noble an aim to vilify or label the demons). The playhouse is constructed and on Brahma's order Bharata performs the *ranga puṇā* (worshipping the stage).²

Chapter II describes in great detail the various ways of building playhouses as well as the various models of playhouses. The

2 The word *ranga* (√*rang*)—might mean red-colour or paint, *ranga*—as a noun meaning the painted place where originally we can imagine one painted curtain as the background.

whole description is introduced edgewise. At the end of the last chapter Bharata was asked to perform the *ranga pūjā* and immediately after is described not the *ranga pūjā* but the construction of the *nāṭya grha* (which has been constructed already in I 80-83). Even at that Bharata does not describe the house that has been actually built but engages in a lengthy and general description of three kinds of playhouses—the *vikrsta* (II 34-6) the *caturasra* (89 ff.) and the *tryasra* (102). The *vikrsta* seems as its root meaning (viz. long drawn out) suggests, to have been an oblong hall with the audience facing the stage at one end. The *caturasra* was different since the audience here could be seated on four sides of the stage—either in a circle or perpendicular to the stage—in the centre. The *tryasra* is a sort of modification of the last mentioned—the audience being on three sides (right left and front) of the stage. The stage itself was a kind of platform raised on wooden pillars. The place below the platform was the *nepathya grha*—the entrance to the platform being by a passage on the side away from the audience. The raised part (the platform) was known as the *ranga śirṣa*. Certain characters had to effect an entrance not on the platform but in—between the audience and the platform. This space was known as the *ranga pīṭha*. Such an entrance was made by removing the piece of cloth hanging on the front side of the platform to screen the green room below. Probably the *ranga pūjā* was performed in the green room *beneath the platform*.

Chapter III continues the description of this *ranga pūjā* mentioned in Chapter I—thus showing the contextual irrelevance of Chapter II. In IV the *ranga pūjā* is over and a *samavakara* (by name Amṛta manthana) is represented. This representation must have been a sort of pantomimic show since it is said (IV-4) that the audience was pleased with the *karma bhāva anudarsana* as contrasted with the *karma bhāva anukūṭana* (IV 11) of a *śūṇya* later performed in the presence of God Śiva. *Anukūṭana* probably refers to *recitation* and *anudarsana* to mere (i.e. mute) *representation*. Bharata is then advised by Śiva to introduce dancing in the *pūrvavaranga* (overture) and deputed Tandu (18) to teach the *tāṇḍava* dance (258a). The sages to whom Bharata is supposed to narrate his *sāstra* ask him (258b-260a) why dancing which is connected neither with the music of the *pūrvavaranga* nor with the sense of the play proper should be included in the show. Bharata replies, to the dismay of some modern critics (or better fanatics) that dancing though not

essential to or in a play adds to the beauty of the show and the amusement of the audience. Verses 19 to 257 describe the various gestures (*karana*) postures (*angakāra*) and movements (*recaka*) of dancing. For the present we are inclined to suspect these verses since they so violently separate the name of Tāṇḍu (18) from his derivative tāṇḍava (258a). Chapter V describes anew the *pūrva ranga* modified in the light of Śiva's instructions.

Chapters VI and VII deal with the *rasa*s and the *bhāva*s. This subject is not introduced as in any way arising naturally out of the previous discussion. After the *pūrva ranga* one fails to see the necessity of explaining in great details the various *rasa*s etc. What does it matter if the sages choose to ask (not one but) five irrelevant questions: (i) What is a *rasa*? (ii) What is a *bhāva*? What is meant by (iii) a *saṃgraha* (iv) a *karika* and (v) *śruti*? (VI 13). Apart from the too inquisitive sages the variety of both matter and style in the body of the text itself raises difficulties. In the first place besides the usual śloka's there are verses in arya metre side by side with prose passages. This prose is written in the style usual to a commentator employing the first person plural (for the author) while Bharata from the very beginning as consistently refers to himself in the first person singular. Secondly the *rasa*s are mentioned now as four now as eight and again as four original and four derived. Thirdly the original four viz the *śringara* the *raudra* the *utsa* and the *bībhatsa* are explained mostly in śloka's while the other four are explained either in arya metre or in prose. Similarly Chapter VII opens with an explanatory passage in prose and throughout the chapter we find materials of probably three different texts: as (a) śloka's, (b) śloka's quoted under the heading *bhāvaś cātra ślokaḥ* (to this effect runs a śloka)³ and (c) arya's all of which are quoted as *bhāvaś cātra arya* etc. This is not the place to suggest any clear-cut theory about the book but one reasonable explanation seems to be that Bharata traditionally or truly reputed to be the author of a work on drama must have also written a short treatise on the theory of *Rasa* and that some scholar later on became responsible for handing down the two together. It is further interesting to note that the topics in Chapter VIII are directly connected with the general discussion in the first five chapters and are in direct continuation of Chapter V. In the latter the remodelled *pūrva ranga*

3 Cf VII 6-10 15 26 28 54 etc.

has been described After that should come the play itself As said in I 104-118 and XXI 123 5 a play is an imitational representation so to say of the various modes and movements of the people in the matter-of fact world This representation says Bharata is called *abhinaya* (VIII 7) and thus opens Chapter VIII describing the four different ways i.e. *abhinaya*s of reproduction and representation Those four ways are

- (i) *āṅgika* gesture acting [Chapters VII XIV]
- (ii) *vācika* speech delivery [XV XXII]
- (iii) *ahārya* make up etc XXIII and
- (iv) *sāttvika* * emotion display XXIV

(i) *gesture act ng*

Under this heading are described the various gestures (a) of head eyes brows lips and neck (VIII) (b) of hands (IX) (c) of chest waist and hips (X) (d) of feet (XI and XII) (e) of silent acting called *gatī* (XIII) and (f) of movements on the stage like exit entrance etc. (XIV)

(ii) *vacikabhinaya speech delivery* [XV XXII]

Under this heading are described

Phonetics (XV 10 33)

Various metres (XV 41 119 and the whole of XVI)

Figures of Speech and Poetics (XVII 44 119)

Sanskrit and Prākṛt dialects with their distribution

(XVIII and XIX)

Ten kinds of dramatic representation (XX)

Treatment of dramatic incidents—*stūrṭa* (XXI) and,

The form of literary and artistic development—*vr̥ttā* (XXII)

No amount of patience or patriotism, much less of reason would induce anyone to believe that all these passages have a legitimate place in a book on drama To question their genuineness in the context is not to question their intrinsic value Besides the text itself is here so clumsy in arrangement. If we want a continuity of thought

4 Note that in VIII 10 the author says that *sāttvika* is already described in VII It is a mistake The *sāttvika* in VII is described as a *bhāṭa* and not as *abhinaya* Besides the *sāttvika* referred to as an *abhinaya* is actually described in XXIV 1 “*satve kāryaḥ pravartas tu* one should attempt to show feelings and emotions

we shall have to arrange the text as follows XV 19 and 34-40 XVIII 23 29 35 44a and 48b XIX 37ff etc. Thus it will be seen that in addition to a number of verses two entire chapters XVI and XVIII could be safely omitted. As a matter of fact the last verse of XVI shows that that chapter concerns a *kāvya bandha* poetical work—more than *naṭya* literature.

In the passages as re-constructed above we have the description and the explanation of *tācīkābhinaya* after which we are led to the ten varieties of drama. It is strange however to find that the matter in XX XVII is included in *vācīkābhinaya* (since the opening verse of XXIII says that *nou ahārya abhinaya* is to be described etc.) The information in these three chapters is more for the dramatist than for the actor and yet it is called *abhinaya*. It was for this reason that we have interpreted the word *abhinaya* as way or method. Thus the three chapters describing the different methods of the dramatists seem to form the earliest nucleus of a treatise on dramaturgy. The various definitions and metrical explanations in these chapters are repeated almost word to word in the Daśarūpaka of Dhanañjaya and the Sāhitya Darpana of Vihvanātha (both works on dramaturgy including poetics). Bharata first enumerates *all the details* (*samgraha*) defines *all of them* one by one (*kārikā*) and then explains them in the same order (*nirukta*). Thus *samgraha kārikā nirukta* style of Bharata makes the book difficult to follow in comparison with the style of Dhanañjaya who mentions defines and explains *one detail* before he goes to the next. In an introductory passage to his work the latter says as much

vyākṛte manda buddhīnām jayate matī vibhramah
tasya arthas tat padair eva samkṣīpya kṛyate ājasa

As the text is diffused the ignorant are liable to be confused so I am abridging the original in the very words of the original (D R I-5). It is clear that the text referred to here is some *nāṭya sāstra* which however has been identified with a *rasa sāstra* by the commentator who says *vyākṛte vikṣipte vistṛte ca rasa sāstre manda buddhīnām pumsām matumoho bhavati tena tasya nāṭya vedasya arthah tatpadair eva samkṣīpya jjuvṛtīyā kṛyate iti*. As the treatise on *Rasa* is scattered ill arranged and exhaustive the ignorant are likely to be confused therefore the information of the *naṭya veda* is presented here abridged in the original words and arranged systematically. From the use of the word *nāṭya veda* and *rasa śāstra* it is clear that Bharata's *Nāṭya sāstra* as available today

is being referred to. It is equally clear that neither Dhanañjaya nor his commentator Dhanika likes the introduction of *Rasa*s in a book on dramaturgy.

(iii) *ahāryābhinaya* (XXIII) and (iv) *sāttvika* or *sāmānyābhinaya* (XXIV)

In XXIII the *ahāryābhinaya* is described. That phrase seems to include the make up of the characters as well as the stage-setting (XXIII 1). In the next chapter the last i.e. the *sāttvika* *abhinaya* is described. The following three chapters—XXV, XXVI and XXVII—describe miscellaneous things like the characteristics of the various characters, the *citra**bhinaya* (a more or less insipid repetition of and minor additions to the chapters on *āṅgikābhinaya*) and sundry details like directions to or description of the audience etc. In the next six chapters the various musical instruments, tunes etc. are described. The only thing to be noted here is the opening of XXVIII in the style of a commentator and in prose as —

atodyatidhim idānim tyākhyāśyamah tad yathā now we shall explain the rules on musical instruments etc.

Once again the different characters (types or standardised ones) with their various functions are described in XXXIV and XXXV. In the last chapter XXXVI—the names of the sages who are asking questions to Bharata are enumerated (a bold and brilliant afterthought¹). The *pūrva ranga* is once again described and finally the glory of drama of Bharata and his sons and descendants and heirs and successors is sung. The curtain drops as if wearily after a verse in the longest—*sragdharā*—metre and in the fashion of later *bharata lakya*s. In writing such a long and dragging work perhaps Bharata had improved his poetic capacity enough to write a single verse in the longest metre.¹

B. CRITICISM OF THE INFORMATION IN THE N. S.

From the summary above one thing is clear that the present *Nāṭyaśāstra*, far from being the earliest, is quite a later composition. The accurate analysis, the copious information and the critical vein (though concealed) presume the earlier existence of numerous plays and numerous attempts to understand them. It is evident that at the time the *Nāṭyaśāstra* assumed its present form Drama had established itself as a popular and a regular feature in social life. What does it matter whether Bharata wrote it or was merely responsible

for it as long as the book holds up Drama to the admiration of the readers and as the only entertainment common to all irrespective of caste and culture? No wonder then that regular and well constructed playhouses existed at this time. The book reveals a historical sense in describing the different types of playhouses. In the early days such shows might have taken place in the open. But says Bharata the demons took it into their heads to create disturbances. So it was considered advisable to construct well guarded places (I 55-79 II 1-27). On certain occasions if the Manager or Patron so decided plays were represented in the open (XIV 64). The time of the day too was prescribed for performances. Generally speaking midnight noon time twilight and meal times were prohibited (which shows that Bharata had an eye on the business side of Drama⁵). The actual times were fixed as under

(i) A play which is pleasant to the ears and based on tradition⁶ is to be represented during the earlier part of the day (*purvāhna*)

(ii) A play wherein the Sattva quality (in acting and in representation) predominates and where there is plenty of instrumental music—is to be staged in the latter part of the day (*aparāhna*)

(iii) A play in the *Kausika* style dealing with *śringāra-rasa* and with plenty of music and singing is to be staged early at night (i.e. immediately after sunset) and

(iv) A play of high sentiments treating mostly the *karuṇa-rasa* is to be staged in the morning

Attempts have been made to show that this time allotment is more or less based on scientific and hygienic and psychological considerations. In spite of their ingenuity these attempts presume too much to convince. As a matter of fact it appears that the four fold division above relates to the four different types or styles or *vṛttis* of drama. The play referred to in (i) is obviously the *bhārati* type that in (ii) is *sāttviki* more or less the third is certainly *kauśiki* and the last, if not *arabhaṭ* is one that is different from the first three. We have shown in an earlier place that the traditional and continuous stages in the evolution of Sanskrit drama were *bhārati*

5 XXV II 59-63

6 Cf. *śiṣhāsa māya sṛṣṭah sa sūreṣu vivṛṇātām* (I 19). The very first production is called *śiṣhāsa* (= tradition)

7 Chap. III

sāttvati kausikī and *arabhati* Further we are told in I 17 what each of the four Vedas contributed to the making up of drama Let us place all this information side by side

1	bhārati	Recitation	Rgveda	pāṭhya	pūrvāṇha
2	sāttvati	Recitation with gestures	Sāmaveda	chanting	aparāṇha
3	kausikī	Impersonation	Yajurveda	abhinaya	early night
4	ārabhati	Representation	Ātharvana	rasa	early morning

It will be seen from the above that style has more to do with the time of performance. Where there is mere recitation the earlier part of the day is more suitable both from the reciter's as well as the listener's point of view. Early morning fresh and energetic is as suited for emotional acting. Where gesture plays an important part the light of the advanced day (*aparāṇha*) is more convenient. Similarly for impersonation to be successful (especially with the conveniences of those days) night time is the best. Bharata however prescribes only early night for two reasons: (i) ladies take part in plays of *kausikī* style and (ii) the type of the playhouses was not suited for night performances. Nowhere in the text do we read of a roofed playhouse. Under these circumstances night performances were possible—unless a play was staged for the *élite* within the four walls of a well lit palace or mansion. Bharata, however mentions with a touch of humour (conscious or unconscious) that he is opposed to night representations on principle! Drama he says would be the destroyer of sleep (*nāṭyam nidrā virāsanam* XXVII 92). Let us only hope that the sage is too sincere to insinuate.

Open or closed the problems of the playhouse did not seriously affect the staging. A dramatic representation was as desirable as any other ritual and as much if not more entertaining. Not only was the drama a divine inspiration drawing from the four holy Vedas but the incidents (*vr̥tta*) and the treatment (*vr̥tti*) in it were equally divine in origin and conception. The very first production—the *śamavakāra* called the Churning of Nectar dealt with the doings of the gods (IV 4). The second show—a *divya* variety—dealt with the burning of the Three Walls by God Śiva (IV 11). Further in the very early stages Śiva himself undertook the task of introducing music and dance in the performance. Similarly the various *vr̥ttis*

ie the modes of treatment originated from the fight of Divine Lord Acyuta with the demons Madhu and Khatvaha (XXII 2ff) It is no wonder that drama under such auspices should soon develop into ten varieties though it is a wonder that no new varieties were introduced by the dramatists or recognised by the critics ever since. Perhaps the later dramatists were less original or the later critics less observant or the sanctity attached to Bharata's name was too solemn to allow any departures. As for Bharata himself he enumerates and classifies and defines and explains the ten varieties. Incidentally he has pointed out some general features (XXI). Thus any play in general has five main ways of knitting (*andhu*) its incidents. To open with the story of the play is narrated in outline (*mukha*) the particular incident or incidents that give rise to a dramatic situation should then be introduced (*prati mukha*) afterwards should be described the situation that heightens the dramatic sense by coming in conflict with or contrast to the preceding incident (*garbha*) a dramatic way should be suggested to steer through this conflict (*atimarsa* or *timarsa*) and finally the desired end should develop (*niratahara*). We do admire Bharata for his power of observation and understanding. It will appear however that here Bharata has done nothing great except coming some technical words. The five stages of development mentioned above are just the five members of a syllogism in Indian logic. In a logical syllogism there is first the *prati jñā* a statement or a sort of enunciation of the thing to be proved. A *hetu* or a logical reason is then stated. Thirdly there is a *dṛṣṭānta* or analogy which is applied (*anugama*) in the fourth statement to the thing to be proved with the result that the thing is proved (*siddhānta*). Likewise, according to Bharata the dramatist first summarises the developments in his play (*mukha*) then cites an incident which would bear out such a development (*prati mukha*) gives examples similar or dissimilar (*garbha*) equates the example to the problem in hand (*atimarsa*) and thus arrives at the promised development (*niratahara*). This logically strict analysis as will be shown later was responsible for a series of stereotyped plays. Perhaps Bharata did not realise that art was not logic but magic that it was not fixed but fresh in form and power.

(C) THE BHARATA DRAMAS

It cannot be supposed that Bharata produced this analysis without any models before him nor should it be held that from the very

beginning plays were written in Sanskrit with such an artistic treatment. We have already suggested the probable stages of the development of early Sanskrit Drama. A closer study of Bharata's ten varieties of representations supports that suggestion of ours to a great extent. Of the ten varieties four are of the simplest type—not that they are mere short sketches but the mode of treatment in these four—the *anka*, the *prahasana*, the *bhāṇa* and the *vithi*—is elementary. Each of these four has only two of the five *sandhi*s or ways of development viz. the first and the last. That means that none of these is in any way different from mere recitation. Bharata himself adds explicitly that the *anka* should have the *bhāṇī* or the recitatorial style (XX 100). The other three also are probably in the *bhāṇī* style.⁸ As an artistic improvement on these four we have the *vyāyoga* and the *ihāmrga*. These have no *garbha* and *atimarsa sandhis*. A story is told, an incident represented and the play ends. The *ihāmrga* deals with heavenly men and women (XX 82) and the *vyāyoga* with a well known hero and a few female characters (XX 94). Battles are to be represented in both (and probably these battles are described in songs). The *samvakāra* and the *dima* are a further improvement. They lack only one *sandhi* viz. the *atimarsa*. We have already seen that Bharata mentions these two (IV 4 11) as the first dramatic representations. By first it is not meant that they are the earliest of the ten varieties. Before these there was no impersonation—and so probably Bharata does not include them among representational performances. Lastly we have the *nāṭaka* and the *prakaraṇa*. These two have all the five *sandhi*s. A true to life representation (i.e. an attempt for it) might be believed in at this stage. Let us now arrange the ten varieties as under

Source	Mode	Varities	Stage
R V	Bhārati	anka bhāṇa vithi prahasana	1
S V	Sāttvati	vyāyoga ihāmrga	2
Y V	Kaśīki	samvakāra dima	3
A V	Ārabhaṭi	nāṭaka prakaraṇa	4

How does the above arrangement help us to find out the dramatist predecessors of Bharata? The answer to this question will,

under the present circumstances be more a reasonable guess than a dogmatic decision. With later works on dramaturgy like the D R and the S D no difficulty arises since their authors or commentators explain their observations with reference to particular plays. No such satisfaction can be had in the N S. Nevertheless there are situations which are provoking or tempting in this respect. For example in XIII are described the various gestures to represent certain movements. In XIII 88 we are told how a chariot rider and a charioteer are to be represented as moving on their ride. In XIII 90 the author tells us how a ride in the sky or atmosphere are to be shown by bodily gestures. In sanskrit plays we are not certain that a chariot passes through the atmosphere anywhere except in Act VII of Kālidāsa's Abhijñāna Sakuntalam and the first act of Vik. Similarly in XIV Bharata is giving suggestions for the names of certain characters in plays. With reference to the name of a courtesan he suggests

dattā mitrā ca sena ity vasyānamāni kārayet

The name of a courtesan (should end) in -dattā mitrā or sena (XIX 33)

Though the first two types of names are common in sanskrit plays both for courtesans as well as court ladies the last occurs only in the Mṛcchakatika of Sūdraka where the courtesan heroine is named Vasanta senā⁹. Again if Bharata says that death should not be represented on the stage there is stronger reason to believe that he must have known and felt what it is to see death on the stage in a play like the Urubhanga ascribed to Bhāsa. Whatever that be, we hasten to repeat that this is not strong evidence (perhaps no evidence) to arrive at a conclusion. At the same time it is undeniable that Bharata did have some standard plays before formulating his rules. We know of no other earlier standard plays than those of Bhāsa Kālidāsa and Sūdraka. If however the author of the N S is deliberately concealing such references in order that his book be claimed (and acclaimed) most antiquarian we refuse to be critical and to spoil the humour of the situation. We will bear in our mind but we shall not mention it aloud that the author of the available version of the N S does know the plays of Bhāsa of Kālidāsa and of Sūdraka.

⁹ In the play Cūrudatta ascribed to Bhāsa this character is simply called nayikā (heroine)

CHAPTER XVI

THE PLAYS OF KING ŚRĪ HARṢA

Great writers as all other great men rise like the morning sun. They bring with them a freshness of feeling and vigour and vitality. They disperse before them the long accumulated darkness of the past and illuminate beneath them the path of future. And like the morning sun they cast a long shadow wherein the substance is given an appearance of undue prominence. In this respect great writers are a boon and a curse—a boon of life to the world and a curse of stagnation to literature. Prospero keeps Ariel as his prisoner. So does the genius keep the soaring young spirits as its prisoners. It is a great advantage to most modern societies that they are led by mediocrities. A genius that dazzles when seen also blinds in following. The study in the last chapter illustrates the general tendency of accepting great minds as standard for all times. The plays of Kālidāsa and his fore runners were studied, analysed and because they were felt as works of unusual merit were held up as models to be copied. Kālidāsa is not to blame. The very example of a genius breaking down all shackles becomes a new and a stronger shackle to his admirers. Left to himself Kālidāsa would have advised (if he had no better business) any aspiring young writer in such words: Live and live thy own life—see, feel and write. But the critics had the advantage of him and said—see Kālidāsa feel what *he* describes and repeat what *he* writes. No wonder that for a long time to come the history of Sanskrit as well as of some vernacular literatures is a race in imitating Kālidāsa and his class. In the fore front of this race is His Majesty King Śrī Harṣa of Kanoj who ruled about 610 A.D.—642 A.D.

Śrī Harṣa is credited with the authorship of three Sanskrit plays—Priyadarsika, Ratnavali and Nāgānandam. It is not of great interest to us whether the king himself or his court poets under their patron's name wrote these plays. Genius makes no pretence to the authorship of these plays and between the patron king and his court poets like Bāna the king has decidedly an advantage. He need not have written these plays and still we would have found out the poet in him. His adventures and his accomplishments as a king (and also as

described in the *Harṣa-carita* of Bāṇa) and as a connoisseur reveal a mind keenly susceptible to surroundings. In his life time he had the privilege of belonging by turns to the two great religions of the day viz. Hinduism and Buddhism. His experience was varied and unusual. His father died, his only sister was lost and in searching her his elder brother died, his sister returned widowed and wedded to Buddhism and left a deep impression on him. When quite a young man he was called upon to rule the kingdom. On his death he left behind him an Empire and three Sanskrit plays.

All the three plays—*P. D. Rat.* and *Nag*—show one hand through and one mind behind them gradually improving in craft and confidence. The two plays—*P. D.* and *Rat.*—deal with the story of that popular hero *Vatsarāja* or *Udayana* king of *Kausambi*. They are different from one another because their titles differ from one another and the titles differ from one another because the names of the two heroines differ from one another. Essentially there is no difference between them and no justification for two of them. The superficial difference is due to the passage of time from the writing of the one to the writing of the other. *P. D.* opens in diffidence, develops into confusion and ends in chaos and convention. As the play opens King *Vatsa* has escaped from prison along with *Vasavadattā* his wife. His general has defeated and killed *Vindhyakula* in the south and has brought with him Princess *Priyadarsikā* (heroine) mistaking her for the daughter of the slain adversary. In this disguise the heroine is left in the queen's tutelage. After a time the king sees her. She is now grown up and king *Vatsa* falls in love with her. Then follows the usual type of court intrigue under *Vidūṣaka's* auspices. A play written about the king is to be staged. *Priyadarsikā* is assigned the queen's role in the play. And here the real king gets the chance of making love to the heroine (as the play queen). The intriguer is intrigued. Not interested in the play the *Vidūṣaka* goes to sleep and babbles out the truth. The queen is angry. Her anger is further incensed because the king has done nothing to save her uncle who has lost his kingdom and liberty. By the time the king asks forgiveness his general returns after successfully saving the queen's uncle and reinstating him. The queen is pleased at this gracious move on the part of her husband and returns it by setting free the so-long imprisoned heroine. That girl however has swallowed poison in despair and is saved only by the magical powers (charms) of the king. It transpires ultimately that the

heroine is no other than the daughter of the queen's uncle. In accordance with an earlier betrothal this love-marriage (?) is brought about by the queen herself.

A similar story with Kālidāsa has lent itself to a lively dramatic treatment in the *Mālavī*. But Harṣa's P. D. is too poor in execution. The whole of Act I is a sort of *viśkanabhaka* prosaically narrating the background of the play. In Act I the heroine does not appear on the stage at all. Act II is an imitation of Kālidāsa. The heroine goes to the pond and is tormented by the bees as Śakuntalā is and Vatsa like Duśyanta steps forward to her help. When Priyadarśikā is calling for help the Vidūṣaka says

bhavadatī sakala prthivī paritrāṇa samarthana Vatsarājēna paritrāṇanvaya cetum indivarikam akrandasi (Lady, you are being protected by Vatsarāja the strong protector of the whole world and yet you call upon the maid Indivarikā for help), when Śakuntalā too cries for help (A. Śk. I) her friends tease her by saying ke āvām, paritrāṭum Duśyantam akranda rāja rakṣitavyam tapovanam

nāma (who are we to protect you? A hermitage is to be protected by the king. Call upon Duśyanta). The situation in A. Śk. is more dramatic, more genuine and more enjoyable since Duśyanta is actually standing there, known to the audience but not seen by the girls. In P. D. not only the audience but the heroine also knows that she is already in the arms of Vatsa. Again in Act III we have a play within the play. It has proved too much for the young writer. The scene is laid (in the main play) near the pond as the Act opens and then is clumsily shifted to the *prekṣa-gāra* the Music Hall of the palace. As the play within the play proceeds, the Vidūṣaka, like his caste-fellow in the *Mālavī*, goes to sleep and mutters out the truth. The description of the music (III 10) and the speech of the Kañcukin (III 3) are repeated word for word in Nāg. I 14 and IV 1 respectively. In Act IV the hero saves the heroine's life by means of his magical powers. Magical powers are again introduced (though this time the hero is deprived of them) in Rat. IV. As a matter of fact, it appears as if the author wrote the Rat. simply to improve on and remove the defects in the P. D. In the Rat. the heroine sees the hero in Act I as the latter is being worshipped by the queen while the hero and the heroine in the P. D. see each other for the first time in Act II. With only two Acts remaining there is less scope for development in the P. D. while in the Rat. the love-story proceeds briskly from the beginning of Act II.

Nor was the dramatist prepared to write more than four Acts. The story demanded but the conventional rules refused more than four Acts to a *nāṭikā*. So like a street artist harassed by a policeman His Majesty Śrī Harṣa packs off his materials with martistic hurry. Once again in P. D. III the heroine's friend tells the Vidūṣaka that the heroine is in love with the king and the Vidūṣaka returns the compliment by telling as plainly that the king also is in love with the heroine. This is not even good story telling, much less a dramatic situation. It will not do for a dramatist to forget that no character can speak to another character (except, in the case of bad acting) without being heard by the audience. Harṣa seems to have found this out since in Rat. II he tries to make an identical situation more dramatic but utilising a *myna* bird. What the heroine tells her friend is heard by the *myna* which repeats it later in the presence of the king. Similarly the clumsiness of the play within the play of the P. D. is avoided in the Rat. where the heroine through the cleverness of the Vidūṣaka is brought in the disguise of the queen herself. For the same purpose of dressing the heroine in the queen's robes the dramatist had to use a play within the play in the P. D. Lastly Act IV of the P. D. is a hopeless jumble of events. In a similar situation in Rat. IV the minister Yaugandharayana brings in a magician who sets the palace on fire. Viśavadattā suddenly remembers that the heroine is fettered and the king immediately rushes to help. The fire was an illusion created by the magician. Otherwise says Yaugandharāyana how could the king be brought to the heroine? Apart from that the incident reveals the nobility of Viśavadattā and the heroic love of the king for the heroine. In the P. D. two situations are introduced either of which could have brought about the freedom of the imprisoned heroine: the help rendered by the king to her uncle had put the queen in such a gracious mood that she was prepared to set the heroine free. Or the heroine swallows poison which fact would have equally served the purpose. As it is the attempted suicide is absurd and superfluous—unless the dramatist was keen to show that his hero was in no way inferior to a snake-charmer! The heroine however found out that it was too dangerous to attempt suicide at the end of the play and so in the Rat. she tries that ruse in Act III. Not only that the heroine of the Rat. is in the queen's robes while attempting suicide. The King (hero) thinking that the queen herself is committing suicide rushes to her, takes her in his arms, protests his love and lo! the

real queen comes on the stage and detects what she thinks a treachery—the second one within a few minutes. This situation adds to the gaiety of the comedy. On the whole, the *Rat.* shows its author as a dramatist of no ordinary talents. The very ideas and situations of the *P. D.* are repeated in the *Rat.* but their exquisite polish in the latter shows not only the boldness but the originality of the artist. The attempt of Harsa to write successfully within the restricted field of rules of dramaturgy was at last achieved in the *Rat.* Perhaps Harsa was too good a king to set to his subjects a lesson in revolt by himself flouting the rules of dramaturgy. Nevertheless he seems to have made a bold attempt to break loose in originality. That attempt was a failure. So after having written *Nāgānanda* in that attempt he reverted to the early methods and rewrote his *Priyadarśikā* in other words he wrote the *Ratnāvalī*.

Nāgānandam is of course, a play different from both the *Priyadarśikā* and the *Ratnāvalī*. The fact that the *Nāgānandam* deals with a hero who ends as a Buddhist is of no relevance. It is only in the last two Acts that the play takes a Buddhist tone. In the first three the hero—*Jimūtavāhana*—does not do or say what cannot be done or said by a non-Buddhist. What makes *Nāg* different from the other two plays is the very basis of dramatic treatment. The two *nāṭikā*s represent love within the court life and the palace walls. In the *Nāg* love transcends fort walls and national boundaries. It is love that we have met with in *kālidāsa*'s plays especially in the *A. Sāk.* So as in the latter the opening scene in *Nāg* is laid in a hermitage. The two plays run exactly on the same lines the only difference being that the *A. Sāk.* is conceived by a master mind. *Jimūtavāhana* enters the hermitage his right eye throbs (cf. *A. Sāk.* I 14) he meets the heroine and the two fall in love. Love in *kālidāsa*'s play pours forth in profuse streams of unpremeditated art. In the *Nāg* it is premeditated since *Gaurī*, her goddess, has told the heroine in a vision of the coming of this stranger lover. *Mitrāvāsu*, the heroine's brother, comes to the hero with a proposal on behalf of his sister. *Jimūtavāhana* demurs not knowing that the girl he has fallen in love with and the girl proposed are one and the same. The heroine seeing from cover all these attempts in a fit of disappointment attempts suicide. To make matters worse, the hero has just sketched the lady of his heart and *Malayavati*, the heroine

does not know that it is herself. Jīmūtavāhana rushes to help and saves the girl. Now it is known that the heroine Malayavatī and the sister Mitrāvasū and the girl sketched are all one and the same. The lovers run into each other's arms and by the end of Act III the marriage is celebrated with the sanction of the hero's parents. In Act IV Jīmūtavāhana comes to know of the sad plight of the Nāga's (snakes) who are murdered in numbers by Garuda the Celestial Hawk. To avert a total extinction of his race the King of the Nāga's makes an arrangement with Garuda to send to the latter each day one nāga to be devoured. The hero wandering by the sea shore is moved by the wailing of a nāga mother whose son is to be that day's victim. Jīmūtavāhana offers himself up in the place of that nāga and is carried away by Garuda. In Act V the old parents and the wife of the hero come to know of his fate and prepare for self-immolation. In the meanwhile Garuda retires with the hero mortally wounded admires the selflessness and the moral courage of his victim, recognises him as the great Jīmūtavāhana and finally relents and promises to stop his murderous activities. In the presence of his family and friends the hero succumbs to his wounds. Immediately the goddess Gaurī appears in answer to Malayavatī's prayer and brings the hero back to life. Garuda on his part fetches nectar from heavens and does more than he has promised by resuscitating all the nāga's he had killed. Thus the play gets the title of Nāgānandam i.e. the *ānanda* bliss or resuscitation of the Nagas. Let us imagine the *ānanda* of Harṣa too who in imitation of the great Asoka after his Kalinga campaign might have promised like the Garuda in the play to cease his murderous activities and wars. It would not be fair otherwise.

What was the object of the dramatist in writing this play? It is usually held that Śrī Harṣa wrote it either to extol and preach Buddhism or that he wrote it when he himself had been converted to Buddhism. The Nandī opening verse, is a prayer to Buddha. In the body of the play the Brahmin fool Vidūṣaka is made ridiculous with his sacred thread torn and his ignorance held up to scorn. Such features are quoted in evidence of the Buddhist tendency of the play. As for the fun poked at the Vidūṣaka we need not be so critical. Even in the apparently non-Buddhist Priyadarśikā Harṣa makes his hero ridicule the Vidūṣaka in these words—*veda saṁkhyayā eva āveditam brahmanyam*. You have proved your Brāhminhood

by mentioning the number of Vedas.¹ The ignorance of the Vidyāsaka in this respect is the stock in trade of Sanskrit dramatists irrespective of their religion. Similarly the opening prayer to Buddha does not necessarily convey that the author is a Buddhist. Buddha has a place among the ten incarnations. If Śrī Harṣa intended to sing the glories of Buddhism in this play he must be condemned as a very poor artist. The first three Acts of the play would be so disproportionate the remaining two Acts so insufficient to convey the dramatist's intention. Secondly a verse common to all his three prologues reads

loke hāri ca bodhi sattva cantam

The story of the Bodhi sattva is popular enough.

But the story in the play is about Jimūtavahana. True Jimūtavahana is mentioned in other authorities as a Bodhisattva and in the play itself Garuda speaks of the hero as a Bodhisattva.² It is rather strange that the hero should be referred to as Bodhisattva once only in the five Acts of the play. In other earlier plays Jimūtavāhana was mentioned as a Bodhi sattva. And yet Śrī Harṣa does not insist. In these circumstances we are inclined to believe that our author had no idea of depicting a Buddhist hero. The conception of Universal Love in Buddhism came to the aid of Harṣa who wanted to depict Ideal Love by providing a hero from its pages. The background and the atmosphere in Act I make a brilliant beginning for such a story of love. But by the end of Act III the play slipped through his fingers and descended to the level of an average love story. In the Aśāk. Kālidāsa introduced a clever trick by taking Duṣyanta away to a field of apparently higher responsibility viz the Kingdom. But our Buddhistic hero has lost his kingdom, can go nowhere and ultimately in Act III has to dismiss the heroine by describing her poetically in one verse. What is our hero to do when the author himself is at his wit's end? In a fit of desperateness on the parts of both the dramatist and of his hero the way of death had to be chosen. To show love at its highest the hero had to die but he could not die a legitimate death since rules of drama prohibited it. So Harṣa had to

1 Act II of course it need not be added that the Vidyāsaka mentions the Vedas as four five and six. Cf also Act II of Bhāsa's Avimāraka where the Vidyāsaka mentions Rāmāyaṇa as a treatise on dramaturgy.

2 *kum bahunā bodhi sattva eva ayaṃ mayā vyāpāditaḥ* VI

fall back on a religious excuse. Jimūtavahana dies on the stage because he is a Bodhisattva². He is not bound by the rules formulated by sages of Vedic cult. Thus the play closes as tamely as it opens brilliantly. And now the list of Harṣa's failures included both Priyadarsikā and Nāgānanda. We have shown above how the defects of the P. D. were improved upon in the Rat. Likewise some of the unsuccessful artifices in the Nāg are retouched in the Rat. The sketching of one lover (heroine) by the other (hero) in the Nāg is utilised to better purposes and with greater effect in the Rat. The fooling of the Vidūsaka in Nāg III with a bad pun on the word *varṇa* (to paint or to describe) the scenes of revelry again in Nāg III are more picturesquely and more discreetly depicted in Rat I.

On the whole it appears that Harṣa was keen to improve. Even in his last play however there are serious blemishes. The unnecessary repetition at length of the dialogue between Sāgarikā and Suśamgatā in Act II through the *myna* bird is an illustration to the point. The king could have known it in any other way less annoying to the audience. Besides a monkey has to be introduced let loose to bring about such a situation. What a monkey to upset and frighten the whole palace! True Kālidasa also lets a monkey loose in his *Mālavikāgnimitram* but it does not develop such frightful and fanciful consequences. This is one of the major defects of Śrī Harṣa as a dramatist. His art knows no economy.

The real trouble with Harṣa was that he was least qualified to be a dramatist. A knowledge however thorough of all the rules of dramaturgy is not in itself sufficient to write a good play. Śrī Harṣa like most of the Sanskrit dramatists borrows the story from an earlier source. But when it comes to re-telling it in a dramatic form he fails. His characters are mostly story tellers and as such we are not interested in what happens to them. Even in three or four principal characters there is no life at all. Either they are dummies stuffed in the traditional form or they are the mouthpieces of the poetic author. We know beforehand what his characters are going to say and what we do not know would be irrelevant lyrical outburst. His Vidūsaka for example, has no individuality. He is not as naturally a fool or as naturally a scoundrel as he should have been. On all occasions where

2 Note the word *bodhisattva* used only once in the play and that too when the hero is dead (*vyāpātatah*).

he makes a fool of himself you can hear the author prompting and pushing behind. Similarly, except in the *Ratnāvalī* to some degree the heroines of *Harṣa* are dull automata who submit to destiny in a ritualistic manner, submit to their lover in a conventional manner and are married at last more out of pity for their helplessness than in the name of true love. With such a *Vidūsaka* as his friend and such a heroine as his beloved the hero cannot but be a school master only he is more temperamental since he lives amidst luxury and beauty. From a corner of a stage, he declaims (i.e. dictates to the school-boys) poetic description of the scene of the heroine of sunrise and sunset at the end of Act I or II or III. To take an example the whole of *Rat. I* is poetry pure and simple. Of the eighteen long verses in the main scene no less than thirteen are sung by the King. He describes the festivities (5 verses) his queen (4 verses) and the evening (2 verses). The fact that Śrī *Harṣa* now and then rises to great poetic heights does not mitigate his defects as a dramatist. Whenever *Harṣa* finds that the play is not moving in action he hustles in characters like so many errand boys and hushes them out with as much lack of tact and grace. Thus to take an instance in *Nāg IV* the hero is wandering along on the beach. He wonders what the mounds are. He pushes in *Mitrāvasu* to say that those mounds are not the Malaya ranges but heaps of *nāgas* (snakes) bones. Then he explains the fate of the *nāgas*. No sooner is this information given (to the audience) than a messenger comes to say that *Mitrāvasu* is urgently wanted by his father. Why? Let the servant himself answer *pratihārah* —(karne) *evam evam*. Attendant — (whispers) *so-and so*. In other words *Mitrāvasu* is packed off by the dramatist.

It is needless to add examples. The only marvel is how such a fine poet turned out to be such a poor dramatist. As a patron, he might have been pampered by the court pundits as a king. His Majesty might have less scope for insight and observation. But this is not all. What is more to the point is the artificiality of Śrī *Harṣa*'s dramas. He wrote plays we are almost compelled to say not because he wanted or felt to study the various aspects of life. Poetry to him was an accomplishment and not an urge. Drama with him was a product not of life but of learning—learning the rules on dramaturgy. *Bharata* says that his first performance was given on the occasion of Indra festival (N.S. I 56). So *Harṣa*'s *Nāgānandam* is staged as is said in the prologue, on Indra festival day. Similarly

a nāṭikā treated in Śṛṅgāra rasa could be staged only at spring time so the P D and the Rat are staged on the occasion of the Spring festival. It is for this reason that Śrī Harṣa mentions in his prologues four requisites for a successful performance, viz (i) a clever poet, (ii) an appreciative audience (iii) skilled actors and (iv) a popular story. Though it is gratifying to note that Harṣa takes only 25 p.c credit for himself it was an ill day that handed over one of the most popular forms of literature into the hands of a king. The rule of law and order was transferred to the realm of literature. Who knows if Harṣa did not employ some pedants to formulate new rules with reference to his plays alone and did not thus give his royal sanction by writing in the decaying Sanskrit language to the banishment of intellectual democrats and artistic anarchists? ⁴

4 Unfortunately we have Dhamka the commentator of Dhananjanaya's Daśarūpaka quoting and illustrating mostly from Śrī Harṣa's plays

CHAPTER XVII

A REVIVAL

(*Viśakhādatta and Bhavabhūti*)

We saw in the last chapter that with King Śrī Harṣa Sanskrit drama assumed a definite form and was already on its way to standardisation. The increasing distance between the written Sanskrit and its spoken dialects and the literary fashion set by such a powerful king turned Sanskrit drama into an intellectual luxury. We might even go further and say that immediately after Harṣa play writing was placed on the curriculum of a poet's degree. We might imagine on the analogy of the restoration period in England a plethora of plays—small plays by small writers. Most probably the same theme viz. the love affairs of a king satisfied the poetic fancies of each and every writer. At a time when play writing is a literary fashion a poet as well as a philosopher or a grammarian can legitimately be expected to write a play. The result is inevitable. Drama ceases to be what it should be both functionally and technically. That such was the case could be seen from the strong protests of two great dramatists after Harṣa. Viśakhādatta the author of *Mudrā Rākṣasa* speaks of plays of bad writers which begin one way and end quite in another one. (*kukavi kṛta nāṭakasya iva anyanmukhē anyannirvahane*) He is sick of pedants writing or taking interest in drama. In the prologue he tells us that he is writing his play for an audience that is particularly appreciative of (this branch of) literature. (*kāvya viśesa vēdmyam paṇḍita prayujjānasya*) He himself has studied drama in all its aspects. In a splendid passage (IV 3) he compares a dramatist to a statesman. Both are capable of working on slender materials or developing the same concealing at the same time the possibilities and of keeping that development throughout under their control even as they raise therein intellectual problems. To write a drama you must be a dramatist first and last—thundered the other writer viz. Bhavabhūti the author of three plays—the *Mahāvīra carita*, the *Mālātī Madhava* and the *Uttara Rāma carita*. You have studied the *Vedas*, the *Upaniṣads*, *Sāmkhya*

and Yoga lores? Yes? You think you are clever don't you? But know that all your learning is of no use for play writing. The powers of a good dramatist lie in his close observation, in his subtle and succinct style and in clever presentation. (MM. I 10) So he says of Malatī Mādhava his social play that the sentiments therein are depicted in all their subtlety actions charming and reasonable and that though a love story it has sense and dignity and an unusual plot developed in a skilful dialogue. (MM 16) Bhavabhūti has correctly sensed the defects of earlier plays dealing with stupid stereotyped and undignified love plots in dull and unnatural accents. He reports his audience as tired of sickly love stories. Let us have a play depicting the heroic sentiments of cultured minds a clash of characters and the subtleties thereof. This is their request to the stage manager of the Mahāvīra-canta (I 2 3)

From still another point of view these two dramatists seem to protest against Śrī Harṣa's type of play. From its very origin as well as in the hands of playwrights like Kālidāsa and Śudraka drama was a product of contemporary social soil and surroundings. In popularising the Nāṭikā form Śrī Harṣa introduced a style of romance that refused to face realities and persisted in following fancies. To Viśakhadatta and Bhavabhūti drama was essentially a social study a presentation of the ways of the world—of *lokacariṭa*. So we find Viśakhadatta writing against a historical background while Bhavabhūti takes most of his plots from the epic Rāmāyaṇa since it conformed more than the Mahābhārata to the Hindu type of family and other social institutions. It is true their stories are old but entirely new is the way in which they are told. Drama, with these two writers is once again a presentation of life as they saw and of the life that they saw. It is for this reason that the Cāṇakya in the MR is not the traditional Cāṇakya a self seeking adventurer. In the play he is a constructive statesman whose one ambition is to place his country under a strong and uniform central authority. Viśakhadatta a member of the ruling class had not lived in vain at a time when his country was divided under petty and narrow minded princes whose one business was to fight with the neighbour. This country did never feel secure as long as the Nandas were ruling. Now it has been united under one sovereignty —these words of Cāṇakya (I 22) are a cry from the poet's heart. In the very last verse of the play the author notes with agony his country preyed upon by the foreign-

ers (mlecchair udvejyamāna) ¹ Let me not lose my intellectual powers which to achieve an object, are far more efficacious than hosts of armies (I 26) In this sentiment of Cānakya the dramatist is asking for a sound statesman in preference to a sound killer otherwise known as a great conqueror or warrior These warrior kings with their hosts of armies emulating the code of another time, had done their worst by fights and factions Times are changed now The rule of the country must be reflected not in the gory sword but in the feeling intellect of the ruler Even the old rule that a Brahmin should counsel and a Kṣatriya should fight is no longer relevant The professional Brahmin Canakya is throughout the play earnestly seeking to win over Amātya Rākṣasa before making him the king's minister In the very first speech Cānakya makes it clear (ata eva asmākam tvatsamgrahane yatnah) That is why we are trying to win you over

Far bolder than those of Viśakhadatta are the changes and the adaptations that Bhavabhūti introduced in the episodes he selected from the epic Of his three plays two viz, the Mahāvīra Carita and the Uttara Rāma Carita are based on the Rāma story Between themselves the two plays cover the life story of Rāma from his education and marriage upto his second re-union with Sītā (It roughly extends over 26 years 14 in the Mahā and 12 in the UR) The poet's object is evident throughout He attempts to interpret the life and actions of Rāma—unavoidably in the light of his own society and surroundings The struggle between Rāma and Rāvana—the core of the epic story—is a fight for supremacy as Bhavabhūti sees it in the Mahāvīra Carita Rāma as an ideal king is compelled to challenge Rāvana a powerful tyrant The rākṣasas of the play are not the fantastic evil spirits of mythology They are one and all well behaved human and reasonable in a way Thus Mālyavān the uncle of Rāvana is planning to get Parasurama a Brahmin and an inveterate hater of Kṣatriyas against Rāma Here, as well as in Act IV Malyavan is a statesman who has a policy and a diplomacy When the defeated Parasurama retires into the forest leaving the Dandaka territory under Rāma's supervision Mālyavān des

1 This sentiment would not be as true of the times of Cānakya as of after the downfall of the Mauryan (but more especially of the Gupta) Empire. The author thus refers more probably to contemporary conditions.

patches Surpanakhā disguised as Mantharā the hump backed maid of Kaikeyī Surpanakhā goes to Mithilā and asks Daśaratha for two boons he had promised to his favourite queen Kaikeyī one that Bharata should be crowned heir apparent to the throne two that Rāma should go in exile for 14 years with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa In the epic the above episode takes place in the palace of Ayodhya where Mantharā instigates and then Kaikeyī asks Bhavabhūti however has laid the scene at Mithilā and has entirely exonerated Kaikeyī from the sordid piece of cruelty and hatred by making Mālyavān and Sūrpanakhā responsible for the whole affair

The episode of Rāma's marriage too is described in an original way Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa led by Viśvamitra arrive at Mithilā where Janaka's brother accompanied by Sītā and Ūrmilā receives them Rāma and Sītā fall in love at first sight The marriage is practically settled The ordeal of breaking Śiva's bow in twain is then gone through, as if formally As a matter of fact, the breaking of this bow is made significant from an entirely different point of view (though in the epic it is a necessary preliminary to the marriage) Paraśurāma a powerful Brahmin feels personally humiliated and challenged since Śiva is his tutor In Acts II and III the poet analyses the character of Paraśurāma in a masterly way Should the Brahmins degrade themselves by taking as Paraśurāma did to the cruel profession of fighting? Was Paraśurāma justified in his efforts to exterminate the Kṣatriya race? Paraśurāma himself answered these questions after his defeat and humiliation in Act IV It was not in the least wise of me to behave as I did My name and fame and family have been sullied by me alone I had many faults in me and yet you forgave me with a Brahmin's kindness I have been defeated for my own arrogance and for my own good (IV 22) Bhavabhūti himself was a good Brahmin of the South, which only shows that he was a better dramatist

In being a better dramatist Bhavabhūti has a claim more to our sympathy than to our admiration Like all original thinkers and great artists he seems to have been misunderstood even ridiculed by his contemporaries Literature and art are the only phases of life where democracy is a positive curse The contemporaries of Bhavabhūti had their own ideals about drama—like the muddled headed middle-class of all ages Moreover plays like those of king Śrī Harṣa had convinced them in their belief that drama at its best, was a luxury and a pleasantry Love to them was mere lasciviousness.

When a Viśākhadatta¹ writes about a prosaic Brahmin and when a Bhavabhūti writes like a prosaic Brahmin where is drama going to? —they asked half in contempt and half in humiliation. Worse than that. Bhavabhūti's manner is positively insulting when he writes of love as

advaitam sukha-duḥkhaḥyōr anugunam sarvāsu avasthāsu yad
vi-ramo hṛdayasya yatra jarasā yasminn ahāryō rasah
kālēna avaranātyayāt parmata yat snehasārē sthitam
bhadrām prēma sumānuṣasya katham apy ēkam hi tat prāpyate

Uniform in happiness and misery, equable in all conditions, the content of heart where feeling intensifies with age and as time goes by ripens into friendship such is love. Lucky is the man who for once is destined for such love. (U.R. I 39) No wonder that the populace turned down Bhavabhūti's plays and philosophy and no wonder too that Bhavabhūti in one of his most wretched moods, cursed it in such dignified accents

yē nāma kēcid iha nah prathayanty avajñām
jānanti tē kum api tan prati na ēsa yatnah
utpatsyātē mama tu ko pi samāna dharmā
kālo hy ayam niravadhir vipulā ca prthvi

There are some who (TRY TO) treat us with contempt. Well, our plays are not meant for them. What do they know (of drama)? There shall be born one (intellectually) our equal. There *shall* be for, Time is endless and Earth a vast place. (MM 18) Small consolation indeed for so great a writer! In fact the whole of *Malatī Madhava* seems to have been written in this mood. The play differs from the other two only in the fact of not being drawn from a mythological source otherwise the same richness of thought the same powerful treatment the same high thinking and accurate analysis obtain here as in the other two plays.

Malatī Madhava is a play that centres round a love affair. Unlike in the earlier love plays the hero and the heroine in the MM. belong to non princely families. Secondly the hero and the heroine are both young and suited to each other while in earlier plays the hero usually a king is already a mature and married man of experience and the heroine a girl from about 16 to 18 and of course never married before. Throughout Act I the dramatist is pointing out that a genuine love-story is a most natural thing (I 16 18 20,

23 27 and 35) He insists on this point because the love of a king and a princess in the Harṣa type of plays is according to him like the love between the circus manager and the animal in the cage. The prince's heroine is always confined to the four walls of the palace—especially that part of the palace which is within an easy reach from the harem. Mādhava and Mālātī however are free enough to mix with the outside world and even in this wider world both have found each other and have also found out that each could not live without the other. In spite of this spontaneous and mutual call the lovers could not be brought together owing to the prevailing social conditions and conventions nor is there any court fool of a Vidūṣaka as in love stories of kings to arrange clandestine meeting. Bhavabhūti could never tolerate the traditional standardised fool to walk in the noble avenues of love. He has introduced a Buddhist nun—Kāmāṇḍakī by name—who to superficial observers appears as a go-between. When her disciple wonders why Kāmāṇḍakī who has renounced the worldly ties should interest herself in a love intrigue the latter replies that it is only on account of her love for her friend Bhūtiyasu. Mālātī's father (I 12) and secondly because the mutual love of Mādhava and Mālātī is an open secret. Under such circumstances she adds it is just a credit to those who would bring about the marriage (I 16). Kāmāṇḍakī is a lady of great experience and learning and of a healthy outlook. The only important and auspicious circumstance for a marriage is mutual love (*Ureṭarānūrāgo hu vivāha karmāṇi parardhyam* II p. 59). Thus she speaks to her disciple Avalokitā. To Mālātī herself she narrates the stories of Sakuntalā and others suggesting that even in the sacred past decent girls have been bold enough—against all difficulties—to marry only those they loved (III 3). Thus training the lovers in their responsibilities guiding them along a straight forward path and arranging meeting between them so that they could know and understand each other more closely. Kāmāṇḍakī makes bold to marry them at the time when Mālātī as the bride-to-be of Nandana comes in bridal procession to the temple. To a wife her husband is a lover a friend all her relations all her desires her treasure, nay her very life to a husband his wife is his rightful consort. Remember this my dears (VI 18) is her advice to the young lovers as they are being married in haste and secret. The story of Mādhava and Mālātī ends with Act VI. In Act VII Makaranda—Mādhava's friend—has returned to the procession disguised as Mālātī and is

married to Nandana. The boy Malatī did not take long to give a good shaking to Nandana. Madayantikā the sister of the bridegroom and Mālātī's friend and the beloved of Makaranda comes to pacify her friend and sister-in-law and not till she embraces the latter does she find that her sister-in-law is really her lover. Madayantika compliments her friend by eloping with Makaranda. The story in the last three Acts is in spite of some of the best poetry in them, an unnecessary tag. In Act VIII one Kapālakundalā carries away Malatī in order to humiliate Mādhava who had killed her preceptor Aghoraghaṇṭa. Act IX is only a lyrical imitation of Meghaduta and the last Act where the elders set the seal of approval on the conduct of Mādhava and Makaranda is more conventional than artistic. It is greatly interesting to note that the commentary of Tripurāṇi is available only upto first seven Acts though in his commentary on I 5 he seems to refer to Act VIII.*

Though Bhavabhūti seems to have written the play for an average audience there is no compromise with his artistic conceptions. He has treated love from a higher point of view. He has introduced a world of realities. Act V is a terrible scene laid in a temple in the crematorium. Act VI is the temple in the town. If in Act V Mālātī is to be sacrificed by Kapālakundalā in act VI she is to be sacrificed by her own people. It is a clever trick on the part of the poet to place the two temples side by side and challenge his audience. Act VII represents a bed room. Act VIII is by the side of a pond.

In basing their plays thus closely on contemporary life both Viśakhadatta and Bhavabhūti have adopted a new style and a new technique. The lengthy soliloquies of Canakya (MR I) and Rākṣasa (MR II) Mādhava's narration of how he fell in love at first sight (MM III) Lavangikā's description of Mālātī's state of mind (MM III) are some of the best illustrations. The authors are more justified in this since they introduce fine dramatic dialogues. The scene of the feigned quarrel between Cānakya and Candragupta (MR III) the meeting of Rāma and Paraśurāma (Mahā II) the quarrel between Paraśurāma and the sages (Maha III) the fight of

2 bhadrām bhadrām itī Malatī Madayantikā prāpti rupam man-
gala dvayam śucitam. Bhuyase mangalaya itī Kapālakundalā gṛhita mālātī
vipannā nistarāḥ araksāgṛhita mādḥava makaranda prēna rakṣadavayā sū-
cyaṇte

Mādhava and Aghoraghanta (MM V) Rāma's talk with Vasantī (U R. III)—in such scenes the dramatists have shown a great skill in weaving a dialogue in pithy and powerful prose. The plays of Śrī Harṣa present a poor contrast in this respect. As has been already shown Śrī Harṣa was more a poet of imagination and description than a dramatist of insight observation and analysis. His plays are lyrics first and stories at the best. Viśākhadatta on the other hand has subordinated—even suppressed oftentimes—pure fanciful poetry to genuine dramatic value. Only once (MR. III) do we find a long lyrical passage but then the Kaumudī festival is to be celebrated. Similarly Bhavabhūti describes Daṇḍaka and Pañcavati (U R. II and III) and it is appropriate since those sights are reviving memories painful to Rāma and helpful to the development of the play. The crematorium (MM V) is described at length for the probable reason that it could not be represented on the stage.

Far more important than either the prose style or the presentation of the contemporary life or even the high tone of accurate and economical observation and analysis is the new technique evolved by these two dramatists and to that we shall now turn

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CHAPTER XVIII

THE NEW TOUCH

The success or otherwise of a drama which as Kālidāsa has said is *prayoga pradhāna* i.e. mainly to be represented on the stage depends on the success or otherwise of the illusion of the audience. With the modern stage and the elaborate facilities for its setting (not of course in India) it is much easier for the producer and the actors to make the audience live and move in the very atmosphere of the play. Nevertheless a good dramatist, with or without such facilities is able to create that atmosphere by his artistic ability. For one thing a good dramatist when and as long as he writes his play is himself living the days and thoughts and actions of his characters. In all seriousness and with great significance Bhavabhūti's *Sūtradhāra* in the U. R. says

eṣosmi bhōh kavivaśāt kāryavasāc ca
āyodhikas tadānīntanas ca samvrttah

Here I turn into a citizen of Ayodhyā of Rama's days since the poet and the plot require me to

Mere directions or descriptions, however are not enough to create and sustain such an illusion on the part of an audience. The power of the dramatist which does create and sustain such an illusion is the dramatic touch. Sometimes it is the background sometimes the description and sometimes the scene or the sentiment or the characterization that creates such an illusion. The entrance and the opening speech of Cāṇakya for example in MR I is a case where a scene helps to create the illusion. The *Sūtradhāra* in the Prologue is speaking of the eclipse of the moon. The way he expresses it there is a pun on the word *chandra*—moon and *grahana*—eclipse or capturing (I 6). Suddenly from behind the curtain pours the thundering voice of Cāṇakya who dares to lay his hands on Chandragupta as long as I am alive? (āh ka esa mayi sthute chandraguptam abhūbhavitum icchati). It is the suddenness that wakes the audience into a new atmosphere and by the time Cāṇakya enters and talks in detail about his policy and actions we have so far forgotten the *Sūtradhāra* and formed a new and intimate ac-

quaintance with this diplomat that we listen with a sense of self importance to the secrets of his policy. Before this illusion would be lost a spy of Caṇakya enters as a gypsy showing round the pictorial charts of Yama and his world. In other words the scene is such that we would never feel aloof from it and by the time Act I is over we are involved in such an interesting and intricate cob-web of plots and policies that we decide to go through the experience.¹ In Act II Rākṣasa is introduced his spy enters and poor Rakṣasa he has forgotten all about his own spy and cannot even recognise him! With our experience of the astuteness and of the admirable coolness of Caṇakya in Act I we cannot but pity the poor Rakṣasa. Thus as the play proceeds we are more and more taken into its atmosphere, feeling and suffering and thinking and acting with its characters so that when we rise we are refreshed as if from a healthy sort of exercise.

A most elegant example in this respect is the Uttara Rāma carita of Bhavabhūti. Herein we find both the skill of the head and the touch of the hand. The story in the U R is too well known from the epic to be introduced. In the Mahā on the other hand though based on the same popular story the Actor asks the Manager in the Prologue what part of the story is to be dramatized since such a venture (viz. a dramatic version of the epic Rāmāyana) is so unusual² (*kumtu apūrvatyāt prabandhasya kathā pradē-am samārambhē śrotum icchanti* p. 9). In the U R from the title itself we know that Rāma's later life is to be depicted. It is Rāma carita—the story of Rāma and Rāma alone. That the dramatist should succeed as ultimately he did in throwing such popular characters as Sītā and Lakṣmana in the background is a marvel of his art. How is it done? Before we answer this question we shall try to understand the story as the dramatist has presented it. After all the success or otherwise depends on how far the achievement accords to the intention.

In the first place we should remember that the poet wants to interpret and not to narrate the life of Rāma. To a Hindu whose family institution is ruled by the father and embraces his own as well as his father's brothers the character of Rāma is ideally admir-

1 This statement can be verified by imagining the entrance of Caṇakya in any other way: the poem is as sudden and as suggestive.

2 Since the days of Bhāsa there were practically no plays based on the epic stories (to be distinguished from the stories in the epic). Even with Bhāsa the Mahābhārata was more popular than the Rāmāyana.

able to a Hindu who from times immemorial has been legally allowed to marry as many wives as he likes the fact that Rāma—a prince—should live with and love only one wife is a marvel that Rāma should suffer and struggle for others is an inspiration indeed. It is not then surprising that a poet a man with vision and feelings should strive to understand and analyse and interpret such an ideal character. How is it possible that Rāma could cast off his wife whom he loved and knew to be chaste on a petty pretext that the irresponsible mob had raised a scandal against her? Kālidāsa treated this intriguing problem in his *Raghuvamśa* (cantos XIV XV) but Bhavabhūti was bolder enough to do the same in a drama which is known as *drśya kāvya* i.e. poem to be seen.

Bhavabhūti has set about his task through a thorough analysis of the characters. From the original epic he has borrowed just the fact that Rāma abandoned Sītā and then all on his own he has constructed a fine background and a series of avenues so that our approach to the problem be the easier. In Act I Rama is the happiest young man to begin with. His enemies are all killed or defeated his exile is over and safe and his wife is bearing his issue. His one ambition now is to be a successful ruler.

sneham dayām ca saukhyam ca yadī va jānakim apī
aradhanāya lokasya muñcato nasti me vyathā (I 12)

I want to serve my subjects and please them. For that (if necessary) I would give up with no grievance, love and compassion and happiness—nay even my beloved Sītā I would give up.

Of course nobody takes the remark seriously except in its sort of mathematical suggestion that Sītā is more than any happiness to him. Many another young man in these circumstances would rise to the same eloquence of heart. But before the act is over *Rama does abandon Sita*! This is carrying one's ideals too far we shake our head in mild disapproval. Is Rāma because of his prosaic sense of duty turned so hard hearted? Is Rāma so unchivalrous as to throw his pregnant wife helpless in the midst of wild forests? Is Rāma so sensitive to a fair name? So scared of his subjects? Such are our thoughts when we feel determined to understand the strange ways of this man.

Bhavabhūti himself has taken care that our views—the views of average mind—are well and truly represented. As soon as Rāma

decides to abandon Sitā Durmukha—the spy—comes out as an official with a contempt for the rabble.

katham agni parṇāuddhāyāḥ garbha sthuta pavitra
santārāyāḥ devyāḥ *durjana* vacanād idam vyavasthitam
devena

Our Queen has gone through the fire (ordeal) and proved her faith she bears in her womb a holy offspring my lord what are you doing by believing in foul mouthed rascals? (I)

May heavens protect thee if thou thinkest my subjects wicked. How could they believe in the fire-ordeal that took place at such a distance? moans Rama. What a noble attempt to understand others point of view! But is there no other way of convincing the people except this extreme cruelty of casting her off? So kind and sympathetic to his citizens how could Rama be so unkind to his own wife in a delicate condition? Strange are the ways of these great men, we exclaim with Vāsantī in Act II. Harder than diamond yet more tender than a flower is the heart of the great. Who can understand it? (II 7) In order to maintain the name and fame of his family Rāma became so hard hearted. Is this self sacrifice? We doubt it again with Vāsantī who says. Oh you are hard hearted! Do you think your fame that you place higher than all is (now) unsullied? What is more disgraceful more infamous than throwing a helpless woman into a dreadful danger? (III 27) It is not merely the outsiders that condemn Rama. Even his own father in law Janaka known to tradition as a great philosopher condemns him in Act IV. Oh the heartlessness of the citizens! The thoughtlessness of Rāma! I am boiling with rage at this iniquity. There is only one way in which I could be satisfied and that is either by an arrow (i.e. killing Rāma) or by a curse. (IV 25) The people nearer at home too are not at all pleased if not actually displeased with Rāma's action. The very seed of all our desires has been first removed by Fate when the plant is cut off how could there be a flower? says Sumantra—the old charnoteer—who has seen three generations of Rāma's family. When the eldest of the family has no issue where is the greatness or the continuity? With this thought our elders are greatly disturbed. Says Chandrakētu Lakṣmana's son (V 25) This is more a technical than an ethical condemnation of Rāma. Even Lava and Kusa—Rāma's own sons but as yet unidentified—punish Rama by pitying him. Without his

Sītā could Rāma be anything but miserable? is the comment of Kusa the elder of the twins (VI 30). In the last Act Mother Earth too is angry. When Sītā says oh, my lord my husband Earth turns angrily on her daughter and shouts with bitterness who is your lord your husband?

Thus does Bhavabhūti represent criticisms and condemnations of all shades. It is natural he argues that none could understand much less sympathise with Rāma. In his own analysis of Rāma he tells us that to say Rāma is great or cruel or thoughtless etc. is not to understand the problem at all. Rāma as Bhavabhūti sees him, is human to the very marrow of his bones. Who could purify my Sītā who is pure from her very birth? Fire and holy water need no purification. (I 13) says Rāma before he has heard of the scandal and after he comes to know it, he curses himself as a cruel, wicked man not deserving Sītā who is sleeping (at the moment) on his lap. Slowly he gets up. In words he decides to send her away in action, he himself is running away—but not before he falls at her feet and cries. For the last time let your lotus feet touch Rāma's head. And then—he b-u-r-s-t-s into s-o-b-s! He still loves her! The course of true love always runs smooth, i.e. unperturbed by such external or material considerations. The love that unites two hearts has its own purpose to achieve viz. to take those two hearts to a vaster world of vital feelings to turn the individual from the human speck he is to a divine spark enlivening all it comes in contact with. Children are the (holy) tie that brings two loving hearts to a world of joy. (III 17). Great or small that is the noble purpose to which a loving heart is raised. So it is no weakness on Rāma's part when he breaks out saying I am alone I am helpless in this forest. I will cry out to my heart's fill. Citizens of mine that are in Ayodhyā, will you excuse me for once? (III 32).

This inner emotion this affectionate tie of children is universal says the Ganges when even Mother Earth turns her maternal look to her daughter. What he says in Act III Bhavabhūti makes Vālmīki say in Act VII in the latter's (imaginary) dramatization of the epic. We know for certain that Vālmīki never dramatized his Rāmāyana. Kālidāsa tells us that Kusa and Lava recited the epic in Rāma's presence. (Raghu XV 53). This not the only innovation of Bhavabhūti. To convey the effect he wants he has not only introduced a new situation but an entirely new atmosphere in which the audience enters from the very beginning and with the knowledge it

already has of the *epic story* enjoys these fresh excursions into the world of noble feelings

As the play opens the Sūtradhara tells us that it is the festival of Rāma's coronation and yet he wonders why the officers and the royal servants are one and all so quiet! How is it that the city instead of being gay at the festivity is all glum and gloomy? The public squares are absolutely deserted! We too soon begin to wonder what is wrong. Perhaps as we know the story we fear that Sītā has been already abandoned. Our fears are set at rest by the Actor's information that all the visitors have left Ayodhyā. Rāma's mothers too have left under Vasistha's escort for Rṣyaśringa's hermitage where sacrificial sessions lasting for 12 years are to be started. What a pity that Rāma after his happy return should not be able to enjoy the company of his people—for possibly another 12 years. The greater the pity since Sita is with child. It is only now that Rāma proud and flushed would need the help and advice and that Sītā the sympathy and care of the elders. No wonder then that there are no festivities in the town. The new king might be feeling suddenly deserted and dejected. So the manager (Sūtradhārā) decides to go to the palace perhaps with an idea of entertaining the king (*sva jāti samayēna* as suits the etiquette of our profession). The Actor says that they will have to be very careful in their use of words (since Rāma is so dejected). You cannot be too careful either of words or of woman says the Manager people will misunderstand or misinterpret them. That reminds me whispers the Actor do you know our people are talking scandal even against Sītā on account of her stay in Lankā? They don't believe the fire ordeal! We are one with the Sūtradhārā who says God help us that this scandal doesn't find its way to Rāma! What a tragedy it would be at this time when his only companion is Sītā when he is proud she is going to bear him issue! With this knowledge and suggestion we are prepared as the main scene opens to sympathise with Rāma universally deserted so to say and we pity Sītā for her innocence.

As the main scene proceeds we feel as if we are in a maze of gloom. Irony mocks us at every step and as we look back we find no one there and so we feel lonelier still. Against the background of Sūtradhārā's suggestion the attempts of Rāma and Sītā to cheer each other convey a sinister impression to our mind. Separation from relatives is always distressing says Sītā and Rāma just to cheer

her agrees cheerfully to what she says. Separation from relatives— ' We shudder. What would Sītā feel when as we know she is to be separated from her husband? However like a ray of sun shone in a dark room comes the sage Astavakra from R̥ṣyasrṅga's hermitage. With childish petulance Sītā wants to know if people still remember her there. Not only they remembered her but Vasiṣṭha had sent a message specially for her. ' The Universal Mother is your mother. Janaka as great as god Prajāpati is your father. You are the daughter in law of that family (royal) of which Sun and myself are the preceptors. What else shall we desire for you? Be a mother of heroes. (19) What a consolation for a married woman! Should she only look up to her parents, her father in law or her sons? Why did not Vasiṣṭha tell her that she was the only and beloved queen of one of the greatest kings? It is an ominous omission and an omission that is cruelly suggestive to an audience knowing the story. Just as we are sadly thinking over it, Rāma in reply to Vasiṣṭha's message that the interests of the subjects are the only interests of a king bursts out heroically that to please his subjects he would even abandon his beloved Sītā (I 12). Our fear grows a bit worse—and we are relieved at the entrance of Lakṣmana with the paintings of some of the episodes during their exile. How far has the painter covered our exile? asks Rama.

As far as the incident of Sītā's purification through the fire-ordeal is Lakṣmana's reply. Heavens forbid we cry with Rāma is there any purification for Sītā who is pure from her very birth? (I 13). And yet the play ironically suggests some such scandal from the very beginning. It could not be helped. This stigma (of having stayed in Rāvaṇa's city) will stick to Sītā throughout her life (esa tē jvātāvadhīḥ pravādaḥ). The joyful interlude disappears as quickly as a tropical twilight. As the three go on viewing the paintings an atmosphere of old ageish mournful remembrances returns. The more they look at the views the more they feel the joys of days gone by the sadder they feel for their present state till Rāma could contain no longer. ' I feel as if I am living in those days in which I held in marriage your hand that was joy incarnate so to say. he

3 Cf. Raghu XIV 74 where Kāṇḍāsa makes Valmīki welcome the abandoned Sītā in these words: 'Your famous father in law is my friend, your father who is the best guide and philosopher of the good (is also my friend), you yourself are at the fore-front of faithful wives. Why should I not be then compassionate to you?' No word again of Rāma!

says to Sita (I 18) 'Gone are the days when our father was living when I was newly wed and when our mothers used to look after us' (I 19) 'Why even the days of exile were happy' 'Do you remember my dear the time when Lakshmana used to look after us?' 'Do you remember how we used to enjoy ourselves on the beautiful banks of Godavari?' 'Do you remember how cheek to cheek and arm in arm we used to talk away the whole night?' 'Do you remem—' (I 27) 'Poor Rāma' the heart that yearns for the past has surely its reasons to rue the present. The more they think of the past the wider is the gulf between the happy past and the miserable present. They feel like children lost in the wilderness ridding away their fears by thinking of mother's arms. Like lonely wanderers lost in a stormy night, Sītā shudder. The gloom has so covered me up that I feel as if I am again separated from my husband. (aham api ati bhūmam gatēna ranaranakēna ārya putra sunyam iva atmanam pasyāmi p 33) It does get unbearable. The misery is not only revived but intensified so much so that Rāma cries out 'Stop Lakshmana I feel as if I am once again separated from my Sītā' (I 33) 'Feels as if' 'Once again we see the approaching shadow of the calamity. The tragedy consists in the fact that while we feel and see and know it Rāma is ignorant and unbelieving. Husband and wife are once again left to themselves. They breathe freely and close to one another. Sītā is exhausted. Ever rely on me, I shall make you happy. What? Looking for a pillow? Poor dear here's Rama's arm. That's your pillow and that's your privilege yours and yours alone. (I-37) There Sītā falls asleep in a minute. On Rama's arm' 'How ironically symbolic' 'The arm that won her love, the arm that promised her protection and the same arm, as we know in the story that is going to cast her away' 'Rāma himself recognises this irony later on in Act II where he is to kill a Śūdra for being a Śūdra and practising penance at the same time. You are the hand of that Rāma he coaxes his trembling hand of that Rāma who was cruel enough to send into exile his Sītā who was in a delicate condition. (II 10) For the present he is ignorant of what is coming. He is lovingly looking into the soft, innocent beautiful eyes of Sītā sleeping on his arm. At last! he says 'I am happy. Such love as ours comes once in a while and lucky is the man to whom it does' (I 39) That Rāma should say this while the spy with the terrible news of the scandal on his lips is actually standing at the door is indeed the limit of the cold calculating cruelty of the Fates

Lest the dull witted might miss this cruelty the author has used a device (technically known as *patākā s'hāna*) where the last word used by Rāma viz *virahah* separation, is syntactically connected with the first word viz *upasthitah* (arrival) announcing the spy (Separation has arrived is the complete sentence idea) The effect is as cruel as waking a man from sleep and then stabbing him. The shadow that was looming so large is now too near and Rāma feeling uncomfortable from the very beginning, bursts out. The poet is too artistic to leave at that. As Sītā gets on the chariot which she thinks is taking her for a pleasure trip (and which we know is going to cast her away) she asks the charioteer to be careful since something stirs within her (*sphurati me garbha bhārah* my womb throbs) Finally not realising the unkindness that is visited on her she salutes in all innocence the deities of Rāma's family (*namo raghu kula devatābhyah*) Lucky for these deities that the curtain drops immediately

We have dealt with the touch in the first Act since it sets the problem before us as the dramatist wants us to see it. There are other situations introduced, as for example Rama's coming to Pāñcavati (II) Sītā's arrival there under Tamasā's protection and the divine arrangement of Sītā not being perceived by anyone else (III) the meeting of Rāma with Lava and Kusa who he has a psychological presentiment are probably his sons (VI) in such situations which the dramatist brings in as illustrations there is a presentation an interpretation or an atmosphere. By such scenes which are as if intimately known to us we are taken to the world of the characters themselves. Thus in Act III is the episode of an elephant that twelve years ago was Sītā's pet. He is known as the adopted son of Sītā. Oh how my child has grown¹ says Sītā. Rāma (who of course, is unaware of Sītā though she can hear and see him) talks as if to Sītā. You are lucky my dear since your child is now grown to a marriageable age. Sītā is now a mother—suffering motherhood incarnate—when she says 'let my son be not separated from his beloved. Every father and every mother at every home at any time has the same sentiments so the audience is at once intimate with the characters and the situation. Sītā laughs through her tears as she confesses to her friend Tamasā look my motherly milk is flowing. There's my child and there's his father and being so near them I feel for a moment as if I am a lady of the house' (*samsāra iva samvṛtā*) It is in this new atmosphere of mature love and its

responsibilities that we are asked to see and judge Rāma and Sītā Rāma may be a very foolish husband but surely he is a good father And what man is not great who has a feeling heart? There is only one sentiment the sentiment of feeling It assumes different forms of expression according to the difference in circumstances just as water called an eddy or a bubble or a wave is water in essence In this last verse of Act III Bhavabhūti has given us a beautiful definition of tragedy Aristotle's idea of catharsis of evoking emotions in the audience is seen here with a better insight Feelings must be noble if they are to be interpreted by a great artist the artist must be great if he is to analyse and interpret the world of feelings. Bhavabhūti has done it in a masterly way and let us say with Tamasā (at the end of Act III)

aho śarṇvidhānakam What a grand piece of Art! Drama is the mirror of the ways of Man

CHAPTER XIX

EPICS AND SANSKRIT DRAMA

In the final stages of the development of the Sanskrit drama the most noteworthy feature is the influence of the two epics—more especially as source of the story plots of the later dramas. With plays like those of Bhavabhūti we definitely see the best and the last. Though it could be expected that many a drama was written after the age of Bhavabhūti it could be said with as much certainty that plays in Sanskrit not only ceased to be the fashion but also ceased to be standard plays. In a later place, we shall see the causes that led finally to the decay of the Sanskrit drama. Here it is enough to note that in the post Bhavabhūti period Sanskrit plays continued just enough to exhibit the symptoms of decadence and deterioration. However as suggested above, the one thing to strike even a casual observer was the influence of the epics Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata. Muraṇi a dramatist in the middle of the 9th century rightly observes —

aho sakala kavī sartha sadharanī khalu iyaṃ Vālmīkiyā
subhāṣitānī

How this good composition of Vālmīki has become the joint stock capital for all writers merchants?

Even from the earliest days as a matter of fact we could see that the epics were an inspiration to Sanskrit dramatists. In the plays ascribed to Bhasa we have one act plays based on the episodes from Mahābhārata while Balacharita Abhiśeka and Pratimā are based on the Rama story. Later we find Bhavabhūti writing two plays Mahāvīracarita and Uttararāmacarita based on the same story. What is further striking is the fact that both the dramatists within the compass of their respective plays, narrate the complete story of the Rāmāyana—including the first and later (interpolated) sections of the epic. Secondly as already suggested Bhasa and Bhavabhūti have shown their greatness by daring to introduce changes in and interpretations of the story as handed down by the epic tradition. As a matter of fact between Bhasa and Bhavabhūti on the one hand and later writers of Rāma plays on the

other the difference that we find is exactly the story of the deterioration of the dramatic art in Sanskrit literature Bhāsa and Bhavabhūti have dramatised the episodes from the Rāmāyana while later dramatists—we shall have to call them so at least by courtesy—have simply narrated rewritten the Rama story in the *campū* style and within Puranic atmosphere

As examples of this later style let us look at the three plays (1) *Kundamalā* by Dinnaga, (2) *Anargha Rāghata* by Murari and *Prasanna Rāghata* by Jayadeva. The first, K. M. belongs to a period as could be seen from a closer comparison immediately after Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti the A. R. as already mentioned belongs to the ninth century A.D. and the third the Pras. R. is as late as the third quarter of the fifteenth century A.D. Of these three, the K.M. deals with the latter part of Rāma's story beginning where Act I of Bhavabhūti's U.R. ends with Lakṣmaṇa leading Sītā to the forest before abandoning her. In Act I the abandoned queen of Rāma is reported to Valmīki by his pupils and Valmīki making use of his *yogacakṣus* now finds Sītā innocent and therefore decides to take her to his Aśrama. In the *pratīka* of the next Act (which takes us to a period of eight to ten years after Act I) the birth of Sītā's twins (who are now studying Ramayana—abālau samvritau—they have ceased to be children) is reported and it is also mentioned that Rāma initiating the performance of a sacrifice at Naimiṣa has sent a messenger to invite Valmīki. It is very strange that important episodes are thus casually disposed off while the main scene is taken up by a dialogue between Sītā and Vedavati wherein all that Sītā says is that she loves Rāma and knows that Rāma loves her. In Act III Sītā her two sons (though they themselves do not know that she is their mother) and also Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa have all assembled in the Naimiṣa forest. The main scene is the title scene wherein as Rāma is wandering with his brother the *kundamala* wreath of Kunda flowers woven by Sītā is carried by the breeze and drops at Rāma's feet who immediately recognises the design of Sītā's hands. The two brothers now like two detectives follow up the clues till they see female foot prints on which they conclude that Sītā must be there. What is still more ridiculous Rāma is keen to find out where Sītā a wife abandoned years ago stays. In Act IV the interlude tells us of an intended recitation show of Rāmāyana in which Dhotamā is to play the role of Sītā. We are also informed that Valmīki has

a pond in and around which women folk could not be seen by men. So in the main scene Rāma is somehow dragged by the dramatist to this pond where Sītā also comes. Sītā could see her husband, though owing to Valmiki's yogic stage setting so to say, Rāma could not see Sītā. Only in one respect the dramatist has shown his imaginative skill. Though the actual Sītā could not be seen, her image in the waters could be seen by Rāma. However when later on the Vidūṣaka tells Rāma that Tilottama is to play Sītā's rôle poor Rāma thinks to his chagrin that the image he saw must have been that of Tilottama in Sītā's rôle. The last two Acts just describe the recreation of Rāmāyana by Lava and Kuśa, who at the end are revealed to Rama as his own sons. At the end Sītā has to go through the ordeal to prove her innocence. That done Rama accepts his wife Kuśa is crowned as King and Lava as the heir apparent.

As we read the play we are not struck so much by any greatness of the dramatist as we are reminded of Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti. The more we read the play the more we feel that some youngish admirer of Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti has tried to make a play by putting together different pieces from the works of those two dramatists. The main scene in the very first act opens like that in Aśak with a similar description of the moving chariot. Sītā's speech in Act I reminds us of Kālidāsa's verse in Raghuvamśa in the same context. (Raghu XIV 65). Throughout the play Dinnāga's verses betray a very strong influence of the poetry of Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti. What is more interesting is the presence of a Vidūṣaka friend of Rāma. This Vidūṣaka is attempted to be created in the very image of the Vidūṣaka in the Aśak. Like Kālidāsa's Duṣyanta Dinnāga's Rama asks his Vidūṣaka in Act V.

Rāma —If you think Sītā worthy enough to be still remembered why did you not prevent me when I decided to abandon her? Throughout the play the shadow of Bhavabhūti's masterpiece, the U R is clearly discernible. Phrases sentences lines of verses stage devices—there is no aspect of the dramatic art where the stern southern Brahmin has not held Dinnāga bound in awe and admiration. And even the Dinnāga does not claim our admiration. Valmiki who is a poet and an artist to Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti is just a tradition bound orthodox minded elderly priest in Kundamālā. Sītā who has her own individuality in Raghuvamśa and Uttararāmacarita is to Dinnāga no more than a conventional

housewife Drama instead of an art of the stage is a dialogue book of the class room The story of Rāmāyana appeals to Dīnānaga not for its dramatic qualities but for its moral lesson

Anargha Rāghava of Muraṇi on the other hand is a more ambitious play Within seven acts it covers the entire story of Rāmāyana As in K.M. here also there is more poetry to describe the conventional time, day season and other objects than is relevant in a drama The drama is almost a poetic composition with 567 verses In the Viṣkambhaka of Act II for example six verses describe dawn four more describe the morning and then in the main scene Rāma and Lakṣmana recite 14 verses to describe Viśvāmitra's hermitage In the last act where victorious Rāma is returning to Ayodhyā seated in the *puṣpaka* plane, Rama pointing to the earth below as the plane flies describes the various countries rivers, mountains etc he even talks of the *Vaidarbhi* style in poetry And then his asides to Sītā where he mostly talks about *uṣanta ratī puruṣāyita* etc are sheer abominations The play is one of the best examples of the degradation to which Sanskrit language and the art of drama had sunk When at the end (VII 146) he talks of his drama as a poem (*kaṇṭikā*) and says that it would please people we feel like pitifully patting Muraṇi on his back and ask him to read more and write less

The third play Prasanna Rāghava of Jayadeva is no better He himself offers a kind of an apology by making in the opening scene the Actor ask the Manager as to why all poets write only about Rāmachandra It is true By the fifteenth century when Jayadeva lived every writer was writing only about the story of Rāmāyana So Jayadeva also narrates the same story in seven acts As a matter of fact by this time not only the incidents but even the course of the various acts seem to have been fixed The breaking of the bow the defeat of Parājura the slaughter of Vali the achievements of the monkey chiefs the battle between Rama and Rāvana (always off the stage and described by two Vidyādhara) all these mechanically monotonously unroll before us brightened up here and there by the feverish poetic effusions of the dramatists The pity of it is the better the poetry the more out of place it would appear Jayadeva has in addition tried puns (one of them is proverbially famous even to-day¹) scenes

1 *nakṣatrakusalo bhavān* (also *na kṣatrakusalo bhavān*)

like Rāvana suddenly becoming a Raḥṣaṣa with ten faces (I) of the fire in Sītā's hand suddenly changing into a signet ring (VI) and in the last act five characters who have actually nothing else to do describe the evening in turns in nineteen verses. But the play is not yet over as Rama's aeroplane is still on its way to the capital. The evening passes, night wears off and then the morning sun is described before the audience is permitted to disperse.

In most of these later Rama plays one motive common to all these dramatists is obvious. We have seen how each dramatist makes a reference to the popularity of Rama stories with writers on the whole. The reason for this popularity we do find as we read carefully through the plays. In the K.M. in the very first act Rāma is referred to as Madhusūdana (in spite of the clear anachronism). In III 14 the dramatist speaks of *Ramabhidhāro Hariḥ Hari* (God) called Rāma. In Pras. R. we have a line which reads *balatmana parinataḥ puruṣaḥ puranaḥ* the primeval puruṣa in the form of a boy (IV 45) in which words Parasurāma describes Rāma his conqueror. The poor dramatic quality seems to have been fully compensated for by the fact that the play described the glories of God. In other words drama as drama did not interest the writer nor apparently did it interest the audience. These dramatic compositions were more of sacred literature than an art, which according to Kālidasa pleased people of different tastes or which as Bhāsa mentions in his Prat. was staged in palaces as mere entertainment. As if knowing this the dramatist very scrupulously but superficially followed the rules laid down in books on dramaturgy. Thus Dinnāga in his K.M. makes every act end with a verse which gives a conventional description of the time of the day. Similarly we find in these plays devices like *pravesaka* and *viśkambhaka* though as in the A.R. III a *viśkambhaka* describes and deals with more and important episodes than the main scene. Similarly in the Pras.R. the whole of Act IV is more of the nature of an interlude than an act in the play. Where drama is a religious recitation it is but natural to have a dozen verses at a stretch (and in long metres) describing anything that the dramatist fancied for the moment. That incidents could be so united as to produce a dramatic atmosphere never struck these writers who were narrating incidents that were too well known. From the fifth Veda common to all castes, as Bharata had visualised it drama deteriorated into what were later known as *bhajan melas*.

In these circumstances it would not surprise us if some honest soul giving up all this make believe utilised drama purely for the purpose of religion or philosophy (in an age of decadence one can not be distinguished from the other). And so we find a play called *Prabōdha Candrodāya* the rise of the moon (in the form) of knowledge by one *Kṛṣṇanāmra Yati*. This is purely a play where the traditional schools of philosophy have been discussed on their merits. All the characters that appear are mythical or abstract conceptions like *Viveka Mahārōha Nirvṛti Prāpti Caritaka Śraddha Śanti Upaniṣad Prabodhōdāya* etc.

Prabodhacandrodaya is a play in six acts. In act I after the usual introduction *Kāma* (God of love) and *Rati* (his wife) appear in a prologue where the former gives to the audience a synopsis of the story. The main story opens with king *Discrimination* (*viveka*) and his queen *Understanding* (*mati*). The king desires and the queen consents that he should take as his consort *Upaniṣad Devi* (*Lady Upaniṣad*) that a son *Prabodha*—Awakening—may be born. Act II takes us to the enemy's camp so to say. Curiously enough Benares Pundits get a scathing criticism (II 1) where wicked men like *Dumbha* and *Ahaṁkāra* (Arrogance and Vanity) conspire to prevent the birth of *Prabōdha*. When *Śraddhā* (Faith) is trying to bring together king *Viveka* and lady *Upaniṣad* *Mithyādrṣṭi* (false understanding) the wife of *Māhārōha* (Great Ignorance) is set on her at the same time *Śanti* (peace) *Śraddhā's* daughter is to be killed by felons like *Krodha* (Anger) and *Lobha* (Avarice) etc. Act III takes us to a different world altogether. If the Pundits of Benares are condemned as immoral hypocrites Buddhists and Jains and *Kāpālika*s get no better treatment either. The scene where the Buddhist and Jain monks in a drunken orgy exhibit a lascivious desire for the *Kāpālīka* is brutally hilarious. The three Bohemians decide to abduct *Sattvika Śraddhā* (Pure faith) who is supposed to be living in the company of one *Viṣṇubhakti* (Devotion in God Viṣṇu). In Act IV *Śraddha* herself is rescued by *Viṣṇu bhakti* while the king sends soldiers to destroy those felons. The battle is described in Act V and at the end the Buddhists are driven out of India and so the play moves on to the last act where Lady *Upaniṣad* who describes her sav with *Yajñavidyā* (the lore of sacrifice) with *Mīmāṃsā* (Ritual Science) and with *Tarkavidyā* (Logic) is brought to the king and the birth of *Prabōdha* is announced. After all the learned and philo-sophical quest for awaken

in 2nd fast

Karpuramafijari the heroine appears on the stage a scene meeting of the king with her is arranged and the scene ends with the description of rising moon. In the last scene in spite of queen's strong guard the king succeeds in seeing the heroine & soon he is ultimately married through the help of the Bhairavānanda.

We expected that Rajasekhara because he wrote all in his own hand would write in an original style we would be completely disappointed. Tradition has been too strong for all these writers. In fact, traditional rules of dramaturgy had such sway over the writer that it was easier for an author following these rules to write a strictly correct play than for a genuine artist to write a play in an original style. Dramas paying more attention to formal items of description had deteriorated to poems either by description in prose or by incidents of love. The beginning the end the incidents the stage-devices the objects of description—nay almost every detail of the play was so fixed by rules of dramaturgy that except the title and the characters, one play was effectively distinguished from another play. No wonder only Rāma plays became popular because there at least was the merit of having witnessed God's own doings.

And so it came about that the religious mindedness of the people which once did not encourage drama did now discourage it to its final decadence. The Aryan religion never in its communal worship was least likely to encourage dramatic representation. It was later after the 10th century AD when the doctrine was revived and communal worship and religious came into vogue that religion was partly responsible for the of drama. But that was the standardised Rāma play. It took

CHAPTER XX

THE END

In studying the history of drama in Sanskrit literature one could safely come to the conclusion that immediately after the age of Bhavabhūti Sanskrit Drama came to an end. It is true that long after Bhavabhūti plays were written in Sanskrit and for a still longer period a few plays in prakṛt also are to be found. But from the examples of such plays as seen in the foregoing chapter our main conclusion is actually reinforced. It is not so surprising that plays in Sanskrit language discontinued. What is really as significant as surprising is the fact that the very drama as a literary form suddenly disappeared and disappeared for good. Upto a century ago no modern Indian language had any dramatic literature. And today when the various Indian languages are showing an alround literary development modern drama unlike modern poetry cannot be traced to any traditional form (except of course the renderings of half a dozen classical Sanskrit dramas).

1 In an earlier place (Chap VII) we suggested that the dramatic form of literature was not germane to the culture of the Aryans. The very religious mindedness of the early Aryans prevented them from enjoying a dramatic representation. For a long time Sanskrit language could not be used for secular subjects and by the time Sanskrit language could be used for popular literature Sanskrit had ceased to be the language of the people.

2 Secondly Sanskrit drama from its earliest days belonged to the kings and the rich peoples. Bhāsa in his Pratimā tells us how dramatic performances were palace-entertainments. In the plays of Śrī Haṛṣa though they are performed as the Sūtradhāra tells us during the festivals these festivals are not so much public occasions as celebrations within the regions of the palace. Probably the fact that most of the Sanskrit plays have their scenes laid within the four walls of the palace is a corollary of this very situation. It is true that Bharata talks of drama as *sarvaśāstrīka* but it is doubtful if the available literary dramas answered the democratic condition of Bharata. Even when Kālidāsa speaks *nāṭyam bhūnna tucer janasya bahudhā api ekam samārahānam* (nāṭya as the common

ing the *Bharatavakya* sounds almost comic when it sings that plenty of rain should fall on the earth, kings should protect the earth without any disturbance etc.

That the play is very late is evident from the treatment of the subject matter as well as from reference to the great scholar Kumārīlaswāmin and to the banishment of Buddhism. It is an allegory pure and simple the very characters produce an atmosphere of unreality the last thing that a drama should do. If the earlier plays followed the puranic style, the Prab C follows the style of a treatise on philosophy. What the other founders of schools of philosophy did in their commentary on the Vedānta aphorisms Kṛṣṇamūṣṛa Yati aspires to do in the form of an allegory written as a dialogue. There is no doubt that the author is a stern-disciplined devotee of God. What he says about the book learned Benares Pundits is enough to make every Hindu pray that he should never be born in Benares. The demoralisation of Buddhist and Jaina orders is vividly brought out in the merciless caricature of the monks. As a matter of fact Prab C, could be hailed as one of the best satires in Sanskrit Literature the only objection being that the author never intended it to be such.

Kṛṣṇamūṣṛa Yati like his immediate predecessors was intent not on producing a drama but on giving his views explaining and illustrating them on the philosophical truth of the Upaniṣadic Vedānta. We have a fiery preacher here not a dramatist. And the author is right since before him he had found dramatists as merely moralists. Drama in Sanskrit literature simply ceased to exist when dramatists preferred philosophising to dramatising.

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mon entertainment of the people of different tastes) the context makes us wonder if by *nāṭya* Kālidāsa means dance and not dramatic performance. Even if *nāṭya* were to mean a dramatic performance, in Kālidāsa's opinion it was a *common entertainment to various people* and not *an entertainment of common people*. That even in modern days dramas in Bengal originated under the patronage and within the four walls of the mansions of rich people seems to be a genuine relic of tradition. Sanskrit drama did not belong to the people. And as the Aryan tradition was conveyed through Sanskrit and as Sanskrit gradually became merely the language of the learned Sanskrit dramas could not make an appeal to the common man.

3 It should be remembered in this connection that from the days of Asoka Buddhism (and probably Jainism) like Puritanism in England definitely and deliberately discouraged popular entertainments. There was a time after the Gupta Era when Buddhism (as illustrated by king Śrī Haṛṣa) once again became the fashion of the court and the pass on of the *saṅgats* more so in the north. This accounts for the fact of more plays being found mainly in southern versions. Between the revival of Buddhism and Śaṅkara's triumphant war against Buddhism on an all India front the interval was too short to encourage dramatic literature. And for a few centuries after Śaṅkara the poets and pundits and even the public, dazzled by that philosopher's brilliance could see nothing else. By the time every thinking Hindu was *māyā* minded the Muslim invasions began with devastating results.

4 The *elite* of Hindu society for reasons mentioned above was no longer interested in dramatic or any other kind of secular literature. Though Sanskrit drama never belonged so much to the common man we would be wrong in believing that the common man had no dramas of his own. Tradition of the Indian stage gives us an idea of the type of plays that existed before and after and in spite of Kālidāsa. As time went on the earlier traditional heroes like Vikrama Udayana Duśyanta etc. must have become absolute strangers to the common man. And we do find that even the few Sanskrit dramatists of the later period have ceased to write about such hero kings. The one story that was known all over the country down to the commonest man was the story of Rāmāyana and so we find every dramatist repeating that story retaining (almost standardising) all the popular elements of myth and superstition.

This is one of the explanations for the fact that the Rāma plays were written in monotonous repetition by so many dramatists. It is only after the tenth century AD that for the first time after Bhāsa we come across a few plays based on the story of the other epics viz the Mahābhārata. Such are the plays the Balabharata of Rajasekhara the Subhadra Dhanañjaya of Kulasekharavarma bhūpāla, and Dutāngada by Sabhata etc. The fact that most of the later Sanskrit dramatists belong to the south is significant enough. The two epics as could be seen from some Dravidian literature were now being popularised in the south. And the Muslim invasions of the north made the south of India the inevitable champion of ancient Aryan culture and tradition.

5 That even as late as the 15th century AD plays could be written in Sanskrit is in itself an eloquent evidence of the decay and death of Sanskrit drama. Sanskrit had long ceased to be the language of the people. Even the respect with which Sanskrit was compulsorily listened to seems to have abated. In the one Prakṛt play available to us viz the Karpūramañjarī the author Rājasekhara tells us almost as much in the prologue where he is explaining why he writes an all prakṛt play

parusah sanskrita gumohāḥ prākṛta gumpho pi bhavati
sukumarah | puruṣa mahalanam yavadiha antaram tēsu tāvat
(I-8 Sanskrit rendering)

Sanskrit phrases are harsh indeed prakṛt phrases are sweet (and sonorous). The difference between the two is the difference between (the style of) a man and a woman.

But as we read the prakṛt play we are struck by another fact which made the decay of such dramas (Sanskrit or prakṛt) inevitable. The Karpūramañjarī is called a *sītaka* i.e. prakṛt play with no prologues or interlogues. The whole play is divided into four scenes (*javanikāntara*). In the first scene (1) the king and queen describe the spring season (2) the Vidūṣaka and the palace maid indulge in mutual abuses touched in phrases with a farfetched sense, and (3) a *kāpālikabhairavananda* performs magic by the power of which he brings the heroine. The scene ends with the description of sunset. In scene (ii) all the usual sickening description of love-lorn condition and of standardised excursions is found and the scene ends once again with the description of sunset. In the third scene the king and his jester narrate their dreams after

which Karpuramañjarī the heroine appears on the stage a clandestine meeting of the king with her is arranged and the scene ends with the description of rising moon. In the last scene in spite of the queen's strong guard the king succeeds in seeing the heroine with whom he is ultimately married through the help of the Kapālika Bhairavananda.

If we expected that Rajasekhara because he wrote all in Prakṛt would write an original style we would be completely disappointed. Tradition has been too strong for all these writers as a matter of fact, traditional rules of dramaturgy had such sway that it was easier for an 8th rate author following these rules to write a strictly correct play than for a genuine artist to write successfully in an original style. Dramas paying more attention to traditional items of description had deteriorated to poems punctuated either by description in prose or by incidents of love intrigue. The beginning the end the incidents the stage devices the sentiments the objects of description—nay almost every detail of a Sanskrit play was so fixed by rules of dramaturgy that except in the names of the author the title and the characters one play could not be effectively distinguished from another play. No wonder then that only Rāma plays became popular because there at least you acquired the merit of having witnessed God's own doings.

6 And so it came about that the religious mindedness of the Aryans which once did not encourage drama did now discourage it ultimately to its final decadence. The Aryan religion never involving communal worship was least likely to encourage dramatic performances. It was later after the 10th century AD when the Bhakti doctrine was revived and communal worship and religious festivals came into vogue that religion was partly responsible for the revival of drama. But that was the standardised Rāma play. It took centuries and centuries before the artist could successfully rebel against doctrinaire or religious dramas (yātrā) and make drama once again the dream of Bharata viz a mirror of the doings of the world (loka-canta) of the aspiration of Kālidāsa—viz a common entertainment to persons of different tastes or lastly the boast of Bhavabhūti viz

Subtle representation of different emotions actions pleasing and intimate deeds of love and adventure leading along a lively dialogues and clever speech (MM 1 4)

APPENDIX

CĀRUDATTA AND MRCHHAKATĪKA

Since the discovery of plays that have been ascribed to Bhaṣa (Bhāsanāṭaka cakṛa) the authorship of the Mrchhakatīka has become a more complicated problem. Sūdraka has been described as the author of the Mrchhakatīka in the prologue but the three verses in which his description occurs become by their very style liable to suspicion as regards the authenticity of their contents. (1) Firstly in 1—3 Sūdraka is described as Dvijamukhyatama. (2) Secondly in 1—5 he is described as a Kṣatriya, and (3) lastly in all the three verses he is mentioned in the past tense. Add to these the fact that he is mentioned as having lived for 100 years and ten days and then immolated himself the whole description becomes fantastic. If the Sūtradhāra himself is so uncertain about the author it would not be unjustified on our part to hold that Sūdraka could not be the author of this play.

And then we come across a play called (Dandā) Cārudattam ascribed to Bhāsa and first published in the Trivandrum Sanskrit Series. The published play is in four acts. One of the two Mss. as the editor mentions has the colophon avacitam Cārudattam. But it is obvious to any one going through the four acts that the play could not end there. The Mrch. has ten acts. The hero and the heroine are united in act V. From this one could expect the Cār. to contain at least one act more to make the story complete. However no Ms. gives the V act. on the other hand as mentioned above one out of two Mss. shows that the play (Cār.) ended with the fourth act.

Whether originally the Cār. had more than four acts there is no evidence from any source. This in itself would make all criticism irrelevant. a comparison of the Cār. with the Mrch. would be inconclusive. However even with the available four acts the close similarity between two plays is very striking. It is not only the story and the development but even words and verses are common. When the author of the Mrch. is not definitely known to the Sūtradhāra of that very play and when there is such an almost word-to-word similarity with the Cār. the temptation to believe that the latter was the source of and earlier than the Mrch. would appear justified. At present the general opinion is that Bhāsa, an earlier dramatist, wrote the Cār. and a later writer either completed it or copied it as Mrchhakatīka.

In fairness to those who hold this view let it be said that they are the first to realise many an objection against that view. For one thing, if there are only four acts in the Cār. (and the story is not complete there) what reasons can we find that made Bhāsa leave the play unfinished? Secondly, if the Mrchhakatīka is only a completion of the Cār. how is it that from the very first act we find not only significant

✓ deviations but too many verbal changes and different lines or sometimes entirely different verses themselves? If on the other hand the *Mṛchhakaṭikā* is modelled on the *Cār* how is it that a dramatist who could write and write well six independent acts, could not write the first four without copying freely from the *Cār*? As long as these two questions could not be answered satisfactorily we shall not be justified in supporting the generally held view.

To begin with it would be very difficult if not impossible to explain why *Bhāsa* should have left the *Cārudatta* unfinished. That the play is unfinished there is no doubt about it. Even as the fourth act ends we are left with the expectation of the heroine going to meet the hero. Moreover *durdina* (the stormy day) that is described in act V of the *Mṛchhakaṭikā* is referred to by the *Ceti* before the fourth act of *Cārudatta* ends. Just a little before that when the heroine informs the *Ceti* about the love episode of *Sajjhalikā* and *Madanikā* ending in their marriage the *Ceti* says — *Priyam me amṛtāṅka nāṭakam samvṛttam*. It is a very curious and unusual remark which on second thoughts makes us wonder if it is not a criticism of the other play viz the *Mṛchhakaṭikā*. Before we hazard an opinion on this let us review more carefully the so called close resemblances in the two plays.

When we remember that the *Cārudatta* is available only in its first four acts we obviously expect that it would not contain the sub-plot of the revolution against king *Pālaka*. This sub-plot is fully developed only in the last five acts of the *Mṛchhakaṭikā*. But it is strange why the fifth act is not available in *Cārudatta* though that act only describes the meeting of the hero with the heroine. The *Cārudatta* not only does not contain the sub-plot as developed in the last acts of the *Mṛchhakaṭikā* but even the casual reference, to it in the earlier acts of the *Mṛchhakaṭikā* are not to be found in the *Cārudatta*. Thus in the prologue of the *Mṛchhakaṭikā*, the *Sūtradhāra* getting angry with *Cūṇavṛdha* says — *Ah dasyah putra Cūṇavṛdha kadā nu khalu twam kupitena rajñā Palakena navavādhuḥkesakalāpamiva saugandha dhedyamānam prakṛṣṭe*. In the *Cārudatta* however only that context in the prologue is not to be found and hence there is no reference to the king *Pālaka*. The gamblers scene in *Mṛchh II* is entirely absent in the *Cār*. Here also among other things, there is a reference to the subplot *Dardurakah* — *Kathutam ca mama priyavayasya Śarvilakena yathā kula Āryakanāmā Gopālādārakah Sīdhā desena samāviṣṭa rājā śravisyateeti*. Similarly in *Mṛchh III* the hero tells us that it was one *rebhila* who gave the music performance. This *rebhila* (act IV *Mṛchh*) is mentioned as the friend of *sarvilaka* also. But in the *Cār* we are told that it was *śābala* who gave the music performance. From all this it appears as if the *Cār* is making a studious effort to eschew all references to the sub-plot of the revolt of *Āryaka*.

The omission of the gamblers scene in the *Cār* suggests another possibility as could be verified by other examples. The gamblers scene as shown in the *Mṛchh* has that peculiar stage technique which is presented throughout the play. Besides an apartment of *Vasantasenā*

that is revealed at the opening of the act we go over the open road a temple a crowd scene and then we follow the Samvahaka running ultimately into Vasantasena's apartment. This change of scene is avoided in the Cār. Not only here but even in other places where the Mṛchh changes the scene the Cār does not. Even in act I during the chase of the heroine by Śakāra the Cār shows a clumsiness by introducing the scene between a verse by the hero and his mention of the offering later—the idea of the verse and the offering not at all being related as they are in the Mṛchh. Similarly in act IV all those changes of scene where Madanikā meets Sarvilaka and where the Vidūṣaka passes through many apartments are entirely omitted in the Cār.

In spite of the almost word to word resemblance, the variations appear to be really more significant. The more we analyse variation the more obvious it appears that only two facts govern all of them (1) the avoidance of all reference to the sub-plot and (2) the omission of all contexts involving a change of scene within the body of an act.

In another place, I have analysed all the thirteen plays ascribed to Bhasa from the point of view of the proportion of anuṣṭubh verses to the total number of verses in each play, and suggested that those plays where the proportion was very low formed a distinct group of themselves and also could be clearly distinguished from those in a different group. The Cār is one where this proportion is low (17 anuṣṭubh out of a total of 55 verses). Here I carry that suggestion further by saying that the plays belonging to the group containing the Cār are of a different and an inferior author than that of the group containing Svapnavāsavadatta and others. This suggestion of mine is supported by the comparison of the Cār and the Mṛchh as described above. That comparison shows to us the possibility of the Cār itself being a revised or a stage version of the Mṛchh. With the latter play before him the author of the Cār freely used the names nāyakaḥ (for Cārudatta) Garuḷa (for Vasantasena) Sayalaka (Pkt. for Sarvilaka) and so on. But as he revised the Mṛchh the author of the Cār must have found two things he disliked one a successful revolt against a reigning king and the other the suffering of the hero and that too at the hands of the king's brother-in-law. Besides, there are scenes of apparent death of the heroine of the death sentence and of the execution place and of Cārudatta's wife attempting Satī. As the Ceti in act IV of Cār says the author of the revised version did not like any death scenes or associations with death he preferred an anuṣṭubh anka nāṭaka. A Bhasa who could show Duryodhana die on the stage would never put such a limitation on his art

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